AVENUE

ISSUE THREE

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DEADLINE for the next issue is 8th October. Material will be printed anonymously by request. If you are writing anything longer than 3,000 words, please consult with the editors before submitting.

Cover image: 'The Bear' by Citrus Knightshade
Back Cover: 'The Lads' by Thomas Chandler

CONTENTS

ISSUE THREE SEP 2012

Lizard's Revenge	4
DOOM	7
Heroes, Not People Smugglers	8
I Knew You Were Waiting	10
Mass Murder USA	13
they went	14
The Words of a Thief	15
Deep Green Resistance	16
Bitter Pills	20
A Change in Consciousness	22
Harmony	24
The Freebird Syndrome	25
The Irish Revolution	28
What Is Property?	30

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deathsincustody.org.au

Refugee Rights Action Network
rran.org

Forest Rescue
forestrescue.com.au

Industrial Workers of the World
iww.org.au

Indymedia
indymedia.org.au

Ban Uranium Mining Permanently
ufc@ccwa.org.au

Occupy Perth
occupyperth.org

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progressivepodcastaustralia.com

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If you are doing something interesting in Perth, let us know. We want your stories as long as they are consistent with our editorial policies.

Lizard's Revenge

In July this year, around 500 activists from Australia (and other parts of the world) converged on Olympic Dam for Lizard's Revenge. This event was the result of many years of activism around BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam uranium mine, and the proposal to expand it into the world's largest open pit mine. The police presence at Lizard's Revenge demonstrates the extent to which the state will go to protect corporate interests. Nevertheless, Lizard's Revenge gives us reasons to hope: the convergence had significant support, and was an inspiring experience. It also demonstrates the vitality of the opposition to uranium mining, which will be important over the coming years as we face more proposals to mine or dump uranium in Australia.

The history of the Olympic Dam uranium mine

The Olympic Dam uranium deposit was discovered in 1975 and formally opened by Western Mining Corporation (WMC) in 1988, and is now owned by the mining giant BHP Billiton. It contains the world's largest known uranium deposit, the fourth-largest copper deposit and the fifth largest gold deposit. It is also one of the world's most contentious mines on the issues ofAboriginal rights and environment due to its unique position granted under the 1982 Roxby Downs Indenture Act, a piece of legislation that grants the mining company the right to be a law unto itself.

The Indenture Act is a unique bill of rights, or rather a bill of no rights for the environment and Aboriginal people. It exempts the mine operators from a whole swathe of environment and Aboriginal heritage laws, it gives wide–ranging exemptions from the Environmental Protection Act, the Natural Resources Act and the Aboriginal Heritage Act, the Mining Act and the Freedom ofInformation Act. It also gives the mine operators a free ticket to extract water from the great Artesian Basin at Lake Eyre (Arabunna country) at no cost and with no compensation to the local traditional owners.

photo by Desiré

Water usage is one of the most contentious issues for Olympic Dam. Under the Indenture Act the mine operators are allowed to 'mine water' from the Great Artesian Basin at a rate of up to 42 million litres of water per day at no cost to the company and with no compensation to the local traditional owners, the Arabunna people. Current water usage is estimated to be around 36 million litres per day, and if the expansion goes ahead that will increase to 200 million litres per day, an increase to 42 million litres from the Great Artesian Basin and the remainder from a yet-to-be built desalination plant at Point Lowly near Port Augusta. The water use from the mine has already had a serious impact on the desert ecosystem with many mound springs drying up. The springs are also sacred places for the Arabunna people, and their destruction causes serious cultural and physical distress for them.

Indigenous resistance to the mine has always been very strong which has spawned a long- standing collaboration between Indigenous and non-indigenous activists from the very start to this day. In 1982 the construction of the Borefield Road some 50kms from the mine site was stopped by local Aboriginal people blockading at Canegrass Swamp, with the government capitulating and diverting the road. In August 1983 and August 1984 activists from the Campaign Against Nuclear Energy organised a blockade at the mine site resulting in hundreds arrests each year: the blockade lasted until November of that year. And from 1999 to 2004 Uncle Kevin Buzzacott established the Arabunna going home camp in his traditional lands on the shores of Lake Eyre, some 130kms from the mine, to protest the mine's water usage from his country. The Keepers of Lake Eyre, as the aboriginal and non-indigenous activists where known, engaged in daily stop-work actions on the water bores and blockades and occupations of the mine site, as well as many Supreme and Federal Court challenges.

The proposed expansion

The expansion of the Olympic Dam uranium mine would exacerbate the existing problems with the mine. The proposal would have meant digging for five years before even reaching the ore body, creating the largest open pit mine in the world. The environmental impact of this would be enormous, and include a massive carbon footprint; significant exposure of radon gas; radioactive tailings dams which would leach into the groundwater system; and a massive expansion of the water use to 200 million litres a day, requiring the development of a desalination plant as well as increased pressure on the Great Artesian Basin.

The potential effects on workers are also notable. Gas masks and other safety equipment that workers in uranium mines are provided with is often uncomfortable and hinders free movement, and is therefore often used incorrectly. BHP Billiton's workplace safety evaluations have focused on

cost analysis, evaluating safety on the basis of cost rather than workers' health. There has also been no information on the effects on workers at Olympic Dam so far, due to the exclusion of the mine from the Freedom of Information Act.

Direct action at the convergence

The convergence embraced a diversity of tactics, and over the five days of the event actions included blocking the road with a game of cricket, dances and speeches on the effects of the mine and of the uranium industry more generally.

On 17 July six protesters were arrested on Olympic Dam Highway at Roxby Downs. The arrestees, who were part of the larger Breakfast Not Bombs creative road block, were transported to Roxby Downs police station. Four were charged with failure to comply with a police direction and two were charged with failure to cease loitering. The two who were charged with failure to cease loitering were required to provide a DNA sample to police.

Following transfer to Roxby Downs police station the arrestees did not apply for bail and were segregated into male and female holding cells. Male arrestees were held four to a cell designed for one, given two blankets between them and repeatedly refused requests for more blankets. One arrestee was not given the opportunity to speak to a lawyer or make a phone call for the duration of his stay at Roxby Downs, only to be granted a call very late at night which his lawyer did not answer.

The arrestees were held at Roxby Downs until past midnight after pressure to accept bail conditions. The conditions which refused included two hours to collect gear and leave the festival and not to leave the state until their yet-to-be-set court date, which would have probably not have been until early September. The arrestees were repeatedly advised that they would be transferred to Port Augusta in the early evening. The arrestees were transported just after midnight. The transportation van had no seatbelts and was air conditioned, and arrestees were refused blankets or extra items of clothing necessary for the cold. Arrestees arrived at Port Augusta at 3.30am and were put in single cells.

All arrestees were tried by speakerphone from the main circulation desk of the police station without any external observers. All but one protester pleaded guilty to the charges and were fined $150 plus extra costs, totalling $624 each. One protester pleaded not guilty to the charge of failure to comply with a police direction and will appear in Port Augusta Magistrates Court on Wednesday 12 September 2012 at 11.30am.

Show us your solidarity!
People arrested at Lizard's Revenge are facing fines of up to $800 each.
If you can help them out, please donate to:
Unnamed Collective
Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000
Account Number 145 456 943
with ArresteeSolidarity in the Reference line

photo by Desiré

A broader critique of the role of the state

One of the biggest issues at Lizard's Revenge was the manner in which the police pandered to immoral corporate interests. The area around the mine was declared a protected area under new South Australian legislation, the Protective Security Act 2007. This legislation grants police the power to issue instruction to any persons in the area: the refusal to follow these instructions regardless of the nature of them will result in arrest. The refusal of the police commissioner of South Australia to answer questions about police numbers and costs borne by the state reveal the level of secrecy and collusion that exists between corporate entities and the state. This is by no means a new occurrence nor was the police presence unexpected by either the protesters or the media. The police presence consisted of a 24-hour road block, canine teams, police horses, police on off-road bikes, hundreds of officers (though no one would admit how many), a police helicopter that was seen in the sky for hours and hours each day, and often into the night. All of this was mobilised to monitor and harass peaceful protesters. The cost of an operation of such logistical intensity must have been significant. Every person entering the protected area had their identity recorded, including their name, address and date of birth. If these details were not given the police would refuse permission to enter or the leave the area. Many cars were defected for minor often comical reasons, several cars were searched, many of these searches included the use of police dogs. The police's excessive presence was designed to do one thing: intimidate those assembled for a peaceful protest. The reason we were there was to protest uranium mining, but again we can see that the problem is not just the myopic stupidity of corporate greed, it is also a problem of power and the use of legitimised violence and intimidation by the police force.

Embodying alternatives

While the police attempted to intimidate protesters, the Lizard's Revenge camp embodied a different kind of politics. We set up a small camp with our Perth group,

where we slept, ate, regrouped after actions and argued politics while drinking wine and listening to ukulele around a fire late into the night. Sounds pretty chilled, right? It was. The people that converged at Lizard's Revenge from all over Australia — all over the world! — were amazing, compassionate and inspiring.

Bands and cabaret acts performed on the stage every night,agreatwind-downafterthetensionoftheday's actions. The music was great, and the main stage became a meeting place to find friends made during the day and share a drink with them around a fire or dance like mad to whatever band was playing.

The Food Not Bombs kitchen made breakfast and dinner every day of the festival. People volunteered to help prepare and serve the food, which tasted amazing.

The toilet crew seemed to be working all the time, trying to find spare hessian and star pickets from people in the camp, digging great big 'shit pits' in the ground and filling them in when they got full. The toilet seats were on plastic chairs, surrounded by a hessian screen that gave you some privacy (from the camp, though I'm sure the police helicopter got a great look). People volunteered to be on the toilet crew! Don't tell me that self-organising autonomous communities can't work, not when people stand up and volunteer for what was literally the shittiest job in the camp.

The experience was inspiring. There was space for diversity of tactics and solidarity between a group of people that had converged from every state and many other countries. There was intense respect for Uncle Kev Buzzacott and the traditional owners. It was the first time some of us had done anything like this and it seemed many of us moved from a state of apprehension to empowerment, motivation and connection with so many incredible people, and are ready to do it all over again!

How effective was Lizard's Revenge?

Lizard's Revenge was an incredibly important milestone for the Australian nuclear free movement. Following the victories of the 1990s, when a large and powerful movement stopped the Jabiluka uranium mine in Kakadu national park; blocked the Pangea international nuclear waste dump in WA; forced the governments in most states and territories to put bans on uranium mining, nuclear power generation and exports, the nuclear industry was forced on to the back foot. The movement too entered hibernation, with only a few flash points during the 2000s. However, protests across the country have been mounting in the last few years in response to some serious threats: a nuclear waste dump in the NT, the disbandment of the national three-mine policy which has led to a fruitless boom in uranium exploration and proposed new mines in WA, NT and SA, the expansion of Ranger uranium mine in the NT and of course Olympic Dam. The narrative of Lizard's Revenge was that the Sleepy Lizard will wake and claim revenge, so in true form the anti-nuclear movement awoke. A large, well-coordinated and confrontational gathering of over 500 people in the desert signals that the Australian nuclear free movement is again ready to oppose and avenge years of uranium mining, tailings leaks, accidents, safety breaches, non- compliance and failed rehabilitation. There are thousands of dedicated activists willing to take the fight directly to the source and blockade deadly mines and dumps.

photo by Desiré

photo by Desiré

Only weeks after Lizard's Revenge BHP Billiton announced they would delay a decision on the expansion of Olympic Dam until 2014, perhaps in part in response to protests, but more likely as a result of 'tough economic conditions' internationally. Only days after BHP Billiton's announcement, Canadian company Cameco announced they too would delay their proposed uranium mine at Kintyre in the Karlamilyi National Park in West Australia. These are positive developments, but it doesn't mean we've won. Not only do we need to build a movement that will stop further proposals to expand Olympic Dam (and the existing uranium mine there), Ranger in the NT, the suite of projects across NT, SA and WA, we also need to address other serious threats, such as the proposed mine at Wiluna which is currently being fast-tracked through environmental assessments. We need to reclaim the ground that has been lost since the '90s, to connect up all the struggles and confront the nuclear industry and governments wherever their ugly head rises.

Nathalie Latter, Bilbo Taylor,
Lian Sinclair, Sam, Laura Hogan and crew.

DOOM

Thomas Chandler

Everyday in Queenspark library
there sits a guy maybe in his late 40s
slouched posture hunched over,
with a belly like he's eaten quintuplets raw
staring dead at the computer screen
always wearing the very same clothes:
black t-shirt, shorts, black 'thongs'
(flip-flops)
a dead torpid face, stinking of stagnant days old
armpits.
Every time I see him I vex:
looking at the screen, every time, seeing
he's playing an ancient computer game
the 90s version of Doom
albeit a classic game, and don't get me wrong
I love computer games
but isn't there a policy of using
the libraries' facilities for such things?
While myself and people alike
have to use it for job searches; mail;
speaking to friends and loved ones and family;
studying; research; education; writing...
but instead one of the hour limit computers
out of the couple that are rarely available
from being booked and occupied
is used up by some fucking pig-bellied,
dead-inside, vacant-faced middle-aged man
a pile of mid-life crisis wasting the 2 hour login limit
of the pc
not only of his time, but ours, by playing a
ancient 2D 16bit computer game,
blowing pixel's pixels out
in the afternoon hours of the day
this is why you have no job
… and I have no fucking job
where is the policy against this —
against little A.D.D fuck-wit mush-brained
shit-bag kids doing the same
and all the while making a cacophony
of hyperactive noise;
or the other type of kids - that just cry
and scream, and yell, and wail insanely
or even the 'cute' ones
that run around like pissed-up butterflies
ones that have the really squealing voices
and who're inquisitively amazed by everything:
a book of which they can't even
comprehend the purpose or subject of
probably not even the pictures,
fascinated by the water faucet,
or by a cushion on a chair,
like they haven't seen one at home?
In retrospect watching the guy conveys such
assumptions
about a person:
it was the grim pathetic sight,
the knowledge and predictabilities
of this sluggish man. Each time I would get up
after vengefully booking my session
having to wait 30 minutes, wanting to scream,
teased like a champagne cork
blocking a volcano...
… have you not got anything better to do
than the urge to come down here, to a library
of all places, to play computer games?
GAAAAH THIS-IS-A-FUCKING-LIBRARY!!!
But what stops me, looking at him
although with resentment
and unforgivable pity
it made me feel that this is what life had come to
… for him, and as a terrible hypocrite in the making,
a ghastly and vapid glimpse of my future.

photo by citrus knightshade

Heroes, Not People Smugglers

The language needs to change

The misappropriation of language and abuse of semantics in reference to 'perceived people smugglers' has to begin to change so we do not further erode compassion, and continue to skew the moral compass, bend and circumvent the rule of law — domestic and international.

People who are assisting people in their flight from persecution and in the right to asylum, in accordance with our laws, domestic and international, should be honoured as the heroes they are. The wait for this should not be a generation removed, as is generally the case in the unfolding of social justice and in the eliminating of racism and various abominable prejudices.

There is nothing more honourable than living the moral conviction of saving the lives of others. The 600 souls who have drowned since 2007 in their flight to our shores are the fault of the policies of the Australian government.

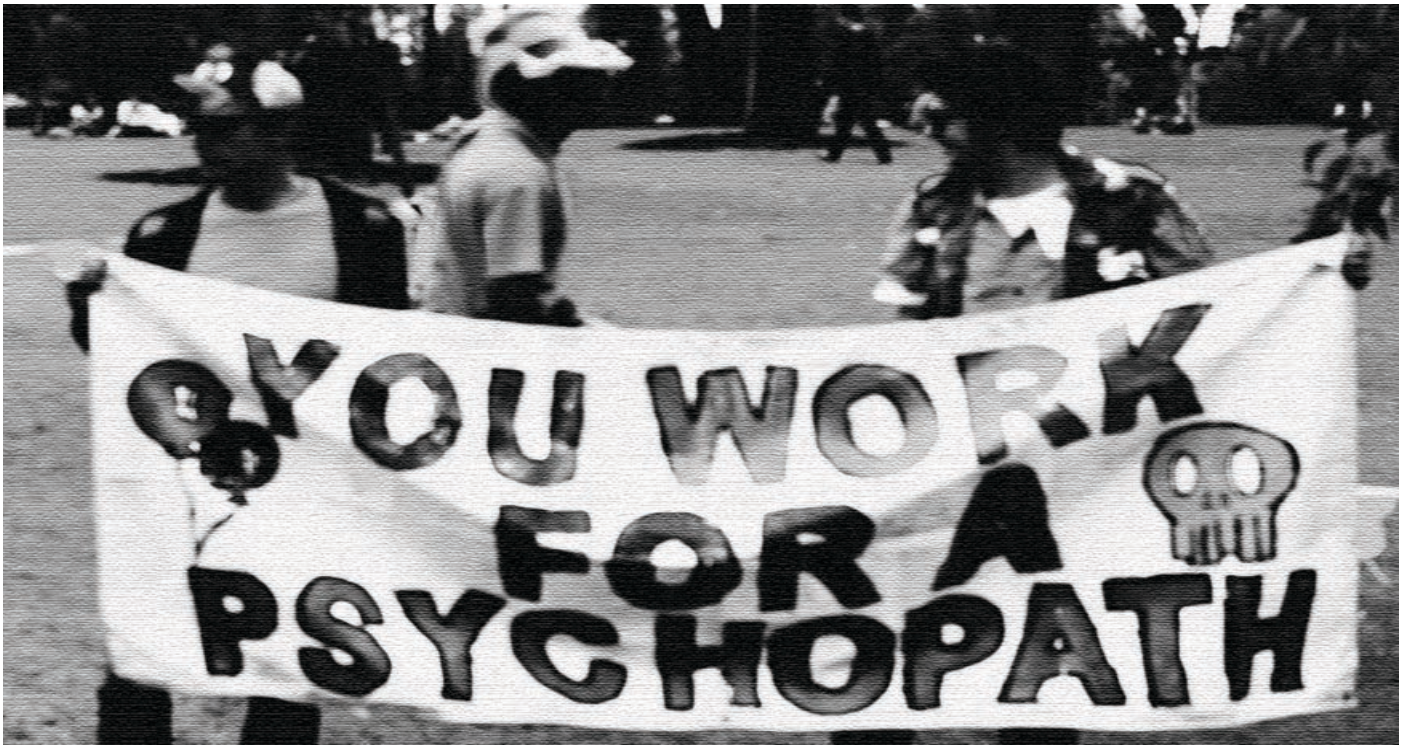
In his book *Journey into Darkness* Winton Higgins describes a visit to the Holocaust Museum in Israel where a note from Australia rests. It is from the Evian Conference in 1938 where twenty two nations of the western world convened to discuss the Jewish refugee 'problem.' Australia's response, from T. W. White, is captured in thirteen words alone — 'We don't have a racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one.'

Contemporaneously, equivalent racism is mangling the Australian national consciousness. Many are arguing we don't want to import the 'Muslim faith' when this should not even be a discussion point. What has this got to do with humanity? I have interviewed hundreds of asylum seekers and all they are seeking is a shot at life and liberty. Most of them do not practice Islam, just like most Australians do not practice Christianity, it's a moot point. It does not matter whether someone does practice a particular religion just as much as should not matter what the pigment of someone's skin is. However to the biased and prejudiced it does matter.

Helping refugees is actually lawful, despite this magistrates are faced with mangled imposts upon their judgments generated from within the chambers of parliament, by political parties withdrawn from moral leadership and mongered by electoralism; a vicious cycle.

The tenuously political, and racist, mantra of 'breaking the people smugglers business model' has caused unconscionable damage. I was stunned when a GetUP! Campaign against the Malaysian option quoted that 'it is understandable that the Minister cannot offer a blanket exemption to any class of asylum seekers, for fear that the people smugglers will exploit it to their advantage.' Of the hundreds of asylum seekers I have interviewed each said to me there was no way to find safe passage from persecution and oppression and the prospect of death without the assistance of those demonised as people smugglers.

They are not people smugglers, they are heroes, whether a few make a quid out of this or not. No one is being smuggled to Australia, and rather people are being saved



anti-Serco action May 2012

from the prospect of death or from being conscripted into, for instance, the Taliban. Australia has deported asylum seekers back to Afghanistan and Sri Lanka who were soon murdered.

These heroes are taking great risks and paying enormous amounts of money to officials, police and border controls, and various others, for them to turn a blind eye or to assist with the passage of desperate people, of families.

International human smuggling laws defines itself as human trafficking for prostitution and indentured labour, the forced removal of peoples across borders for 'gain, slavery or exploitation.' So, why can't our news media pick up our parliamentarians on this?

I do not question whether a very few have supposedly profiteered in assisting asylum seekers however is this a crime? Migration agents get paid for their services. Ali Jenabi did not profiteer. If we want to buy into the misappropriated terminology and the myth of a business model then let us consider the words of the Director of Refugee and Asylum Law at the University of Michigan, James Hathaway, 'Canada and other developed countries created the market on which smugglers depend by erecting migration walls around their territories. The more difficult it is to get across a border to safety on one's own, the more sensible it is to hire a smuggler to navigate the barriers to entry. Smugglers are thus the critical bridge to get at-risk people to safety. Which one of us, if confronted with a desperate need to flee but facing seemingly impossible barriers, would not seek out a smuggler to assist us?' However, we have to start having a good look at ourselves and what we have bought into (racism of course) when we label people as smugglers for merely saving lives, of families and children we have a real problem of identity and of morality.

Many perceived people smugglers were asylum seekers and refugees and they understand the predicament of their peoples, those persecuted and displaced. Iraqi Ali Jenabi's brother was killed by Saddam Hussein's forces. He arrived in Indonesia penniless and to earn passage for his family to Australia, and which included his mother, sisters, brothers and an uncle he worked for perceived people smugglers. His family finally arrived in three separate boats.

Ali Jenabi's humanity continued and he has since helped many others seek passage, including those with no money. He is a hero to the Iraqi communities of Australia, yet to Prime Minister Julia Gillard he is a people smuggler and could face ten years in prison. Paragraphs 232 and 233 of the Migration Act support the right to asylum and for asylum seekers to be assisted. A few years ago twenty seven legal experts explained to a Senate Estimates Inquiry that indeed there is nothing unlawful in assisting people with safe passage to foreign shores.

By 1938, about 150,000 German Jews, one in four, had already fled Germany. After Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, an additional 185,000 Jews were brought under Nazi rule. Many Jews were unable to find countries willing to take them in. Many German and Austrian Jews tried to go to the United States however they could not obtain the visas — there were no 'queues'. Though news of the violent pogroms of November 1938 was widely reported, Americans remained reluctant to welcome Jewish refugees. In the midst of the Great Depression, many Americans believed that refugees would compete with them for jobs and overburden social programs to assist the needy.

In 1924 the US Congress had set up immigration quotas limiting the number of immigrants and discriminated against groups considered racially and ethnically undesirable. These quotas remained in place even after President Franklin D. Roosevelt, responding to mounting political pressure, called for an international conference to address the refugee problem — the Evian Conference, 1938.

In 2012, minuscule resettlement quotas blight the prospect of humanity and the coalescing of peoples. The concept of civil society is much pummelled by the Commonwealth government and its jurisdictions however it is not the lived experience. Because of the migration walls, people who should have been granted asylum will continue to be deported at higher rates than ever before, even when compared to the Howard/Ruddock years. As a result, many of the deportees will be cruelly persecuted and many will be murdered, as has already been the case with some. In protecting migration walls our governments will continue to rely on Kafkaesque principles, building brick by brick these migration walls with mortar that is the blood of those they keep out. Those who will die in transit, at sea, in detention centres and refugee camps, or languish destitute with no prospect of a helping hand. In an effort to wipe the blood from their hands governments will continue to deny their racism, their disconnection with humanity, and describe those who openly, and with great risk to themselves, assist refugees and displaced peoples, as 'people smugglers'.

Gerry Georgatos

. . . says 'Tasers aren't very lethal. Honest. Would I lie to you?'

I Knew You Were Waiting

Adam Rowell

They stopped at a set of lights. The electronic bleeps echoed. The wide footpaths along Collins Street were almost empty. Somewhere a vehicle moved and another electronic bleep sounded. Together they waited. The time between them was without voices now. Finally they crossed and continued walking together.

His eyes met her marching heels but rose quickly to hips covered in dark denim. A sheet of red velvet decorated the vision of denim that ran down her legs. The colour of her hair a month ago. Almost the colour of the red velvet jacket, which swept across her hips. Hair dark and cut short now permitted the fullness of her grayish eyes and thin crooked mouth to seem less gentle than before. He caught a long stare at her slight mouth but lowered to her neck before she swung her head in his direction. Her hand taken by the deep pocket of the jacket. She removed a phone. Her elongated thumb rode across the bright surface.

'My son has a phone now. Actually it's more for me, call it piece of mind', she said.

Joanne had been at the call centre for a couple of years. They sat close and talked in between calls. The ten minute break spent together on the corner. He talked while Joanne smoked her two cigarettes. They had done this for four months.

After the shift on Saturday, they had walked down Collins Street together. The following week they had walked together after each shift. At the end of the week they had their first coffee together.

Her husband had left twelve months ago. They were renting a three bedroom house in Coburg. He left a month's rent in an envelope. A note that said goodbye. His house key on the kitchen bench. And took the car. She came home from her mother's to an empty house.

After that she applied for housing assistance. In the meantime she stayed with her mother. Her mother's home was uncomfortable and overcrowded with her two younger sisters.
She said, 'It was one of those cases where a marriage just stops without any real arguments, no build up. It was over'.

Joanne and her two sons now lived in a block of flats. She worked at the call centre each weeknight and every second weekend. The boys were old enough to be left alone some of the time when her mother wasn't available.

'How old are your sons?' asked Peter.
'Seven and eight', she said.

He tried to catch her eyes. But they moved fast and only stopped when she took a drag on her cigarette.

'You ever been married?' she asked.
'No but I lived with someone for three years'.
'Did she leave you?'
'No it was me who left'.

Her cigarette finished and she reached for another but the pack was empty. Her long fingers with chipped paint and bitten nails closed the lid on the packet and crumpled it.

'Why don't you smoke Peter?'

'My parents smoked in the house when I was a kid. I think that had an influence on my decision'.

She dropped the squashed packet in the coffee cup.

'Funny that's why my husband never smoked'.
'Is that true?'
'He always said, I've been smoking all my life but I've never held a cigarette'.
'I've held one just see to see how it felt. I couldn't put it to my lips. I felt foolish enough having it held between my fingers'.
The corner of her mouth twitched. Enough lip moved to show her vampire tooth. She stuck a finger to the twitch and it ceased.

'I've got an idea, how would you like to meet Gavin and Ivan, my boys. What about next Sunday?'
'I'd love to come to your flat'.

He boarded a train at Melbourne Central. 'Take the Upfield line and get off at Flemington Bridge', she told him.

On the platform at Flemington Bridge. The traffic was a sound above. A huge body of concrete. Metal arms. Engineered pieces of practical sculpture craned and arched in sections over a bridge. A sky bulged in tones of grey and without birds. On the horizon, blocks of concrete towered with windowed spaces where he was to go halfway to the top.

He left the platform and walked along Racecourse Road. The creek flowed beneath. Weeks of rain. Patches turned to marsh. Long grass and reeds. Weeds were abundant and impressive among the vegetation like large heads of lettuce. Places to hide and places to be hidden. More rain was to come.
He walked to the entrance of the first block. Cold air. Trapped at the bottom of the stair well. He gazed upward and a door slammed shut. A scream, footsteps, voices and then another door slammed. Nothing.

Halfway. Written on the wall in tiny neat writing - And time would pass upon it all with blocks and nothing more created with the aid of the future prehistoric – He was close, almost touching the wall with his nose.

One of the boys answered the door. Peter introduced himself to the boy at the door. The boy lent his head against the door. Dark eyes, red eyes, he'd been crying.

'There something in my finger, a splinter in this one, yes it's a splinter can you see it?' he asked the man at the door.

He tried to ignore the boy's question and draw attention to his arrival. He knocked again. The boy's head bounced off the heavy wood.

The boy stepped back from the door and invited Peter to move past.

‘I knew you were coming around. You can come in if you want?’
‘Is your mother home?’
‘No she had to go out for a bit. My name’s Gavin and you’re Peter aren’t you?’
‘Yes, yes I am’.
‘She told me you’d be visiting today. Have you been running? Didn’t you take the elevator?’

The boy turned his back on the visitor and moved slowly across the floor. A sickly stagger, close to collapse at any moment. He disappeared from view. Seconds passed without a word.

‘Are you nervous?’ asked Gavin.

A softly spoken question drained from an invisible tape machine.

‘No, why would I be nervous?’
‘You can come in’.

Gavin sat centre on a three seater couch.

‘Sit down, she won’t be too long’.

Peter sat to the left of the boy, near the window. After a short while he began to pick at a thread in the arm of the couch. A pulled thread broke pieces of the black vinyl which fell like crumbs on the arm. He arranged two piles and began another pull of the thread.
‘Can you please stop doing what you’re doing to our couch’?
‘What…is this your mum’s couch?’
‘Yes why? Who do you think it belongs to?’
‘I didn’t know’.

Gavin reached across Peter and brushed the black crumbs to the floor. Peter drew his body rigid and his head shot back and hit the wall behind him.

‘It’s a thin wall, listen you can hear me in there’, said Gavin and jumped up from the couch. Air leaving a deflating cushion.

Peter pressed his ear in different spots along the wall, eventually travelling to the other side of the couch. The room behind Peter’s head. Footsteps across the floor.

‘Get out of bed you lazy bones, come and see the visitor’.

The boy returned.

‘Excuse me but my brother is in bed, and he wants to see you but he feels a bit sick, so please come with me’.
‘Hang on a second, who’s in the room?’
‘My brother. She told you didn’t she? That she’s got two of us?’

Gavin slapped both hands on Peter’s and brought him to his feet. Small muscular hands gripped the adult hand and led him to the door.

‘He’s coming in now’, Gavin yelled at the closed door.

The door opened and they entered the room. The curtains were drawn. Gavin brought Peter into the centre of the room. A double bunk bed. Gavin kept hold of Peter’s hand. No one on the top bunk. Peter tilted his head to see the other boy in the bottom bunk. Someone was tucked under the covers. The two shuffled toward the bed. Peter got down on his knees and placed his hand on the bed cover. A puffy doona. It collapsed. The boy was not under the doona.

photo by Desiré

‘Well I don’t know where he’s gone, that little devil’, said Gavin.

The boy laughed, soft and mocking. He told Peter to get up. Peter responded like he’d received an order. Gavin turned him by the hand to face a built-in wardrobe.

‘Is he in there Gavin? Hiding somewhere?’
‘I don’t know what he’s done, I told him to wait and we’d come in and see him’.
‘You said he was sick’.
‘That’s what he told me’.

Peter moved independently toward the wardrobe. Hand against the wardrobe door. Opened the door. Nothing but clothes on hangers. He put his head in. One leg then the other. He was in the wardrobe. The door was closed.

‘Gavin what are you doing, is he in here or somewhere else?’

Peter couldn’t open the door. There was a weight. Something was moved, someone struggled but the object was moved quickly into a position. Peter pushed on the door. The door wouldn’t open. He used his shoulder. It gave a little but was slammed shut. The wardrobe was dark. Hung material in the face. Arms without hands. Touched.

‘Ivan…you in here?’

The wardrobe door was solid unlike the wall behind him. He knocked on the wardrobe door like a request to re-enter the bedroom.

‘Gavin, what’s against the door? Can you let me out?’
‘I can’t because Ivan told me to push the bed against the door, and he’s gone to get mum’.
‘Why did he tell you to do that? I thought he was sick?’
‘He didn’t think you were a nice person’.

Peter pressed his shoulder against the door. And kept on. The bed shifted. He created enough space to see Gavin. He asked for help. Gavin smiled and said his mother would be home soon.

‘Please move the bed, I want to get out’.
‘Oh shut up, I told you mum will be back soon’.

A smirk on the boy’s face. Peter put his body at the door once more. The boy pushed back on the bed. The door shut.

‘Anyway Ivan’s in there with you I lied, I moved the bed myself’.

Face in fabric. A body in the dark. Wrapped around his head - a shirt, a jacket. Tangled under and through his arm. The jangling skeleton key clang of empty coat hangers on the rail. Head on the door free but then a small invasion about his body again. He struggled to the other side.

His hand caught on something. He pulled his hand away. He gripped it with his other. It was cut. It was a deep cut. It was open and blood fell freely from it.

A whisper in the dark. Another sound other than his. What did it say?

‘Is someone in here? I’m bleeding’.

A voice but too soft and quick to capture the words it spoke.

‘Please. I just want to stop bleeding on the clothes’.
‘On my clothes?’
‘What, what did you say?’
‘Don’t bleed on my fucking clothes’.

The voice so close now that the air it breathed broke across Peter’s ear. He let out a seagull like sound and kicked at the door.

‘Let me out’, he squealed.

A rhythmic string of electronic bleeps.

‘Hello, no he’s not here. What I don’t know. No I …bye’.

Open. Light flashed across his eyes. A glimpse of Gavin with arms outstretched ready to give a reassuring hug. It was hidden in the glare of the light. In Gavin’s hand was a kitchen knife, which next entered his body. Peter witnessed its length only once it was removed from the side of his body in one awful pull. More blood fell. And then another strike but this time from behind.

Nothing was said. No expression of pain. At the bottom of the stairs. On his back. Concrete became gravel. Soon a mat of grass flowed underneath. A belt of long grass slapped at his face. Dropped. Still.

One eye opened on Racecourse Road from the long grass and reeds, where he’d crawled from the footpath. The rain drizzled down upon his bloodied face. A dribble of blood from his mouth.

On the footpath. A figure walked back and forth in the rain. His other eye opened. Joanne on the bridge. Focus closer. She smoked a cigarette. She was waiting for someone. Eye closed.

The folding of long grass trodden wet under shoes. Circled around his head. Stop. Electronic bleeps. Stop.

photo by Desiré

Situation Normal: Mass Murder USA

Another day, another mass shooting in America, another day of people acting all shocked and surprised. But why? Mass shootings are shocking, of course. But surprising?

The very idea of America is founded on mass murder. Native Americans didn't disappear by accident. They were systematically slaughtered by deliberate and officially sanctioned mass murder that went on into the twentieth century. And a society cannot base its economic prosperity on slavery without force of arms.

America's myth is that it was founded on freedom. But the Puritans in the Mayflower weren't seeking freedom. They were seeking an escape from freedom. They were seeking the right to persecute, to pursue rigidity and conformity.

The so-called gun lobby persists with this warped version of what freedom is: they are actually the murder lobby. Every time there is a mass shooting the National Rifle Association comes out with a variation of 'Guns don't kill people. People kill people.' They just don't have the guts to finish saying what they're thinking: 'People kill people, and we're OK with that.'

Because mass murder is entirely normal in the USA. It's not the aberration, it's the day-to-day existence of the American nightmare. Just listen to the survivors of the Batman shooting. 'We thought it was part of the show.' Because that's not a delusion, that is exactly what it is: it's part of the show, part of the American spectacle.

Mass murder is entirely normal in the USA. It's not the aberration, it's the day-to-day existence of the American nightmare.

Not only is America a murderous society at home, it has also been a society that has been almost continuously engaged in declared warfare abroad. Since 1776, the only long period America has gone without being in a state of declared war is between the World Wars, 11th November 1918 to 7th December 1941.

The Governor of Colorado, John Hickenlooper, said that the Batman shooting was 'an act apparently of a very deranged mind.' He added: 'This is a safe city, a safe state, and a safe country. We have to recognise that we can't allow people that are aberrations of nature to take away the joys and freedoms that we enjoy.' He's taking the piss. In 2010, the latest year for which detailed statistics are available, there were 12,996 murders in the US. Of those, 8,775 were caused by firearms. There are 100,000 gun deaths a year in the whole world, and that includes the drug wars in Colombia and Mexico and the traumatised post-apartheid South Africa, which are the only places more violent than the USA. So nearly a tenth of all gun murders in the world take place in America.

The other recurrent theme around mass shootings is the sanctified lie about what is meant by the right to bear arms. In an excellent book about American violence, published fifty years ago, The Armed Society, Tristram Coffin points out that for ten years after the Declaration of Independence the main topic of American political discussion was whether or not the United States should ever have a standing army. Congress eventually decided that British colonial dominance had only been possible with a standing army, so to prevent America becoming a colonial power itself, it was decided that America should never have an army. Therefore, to defend itself the citizenry would have to be armed.

If Congress had worded the second amendment a little differently the whole debate would be different now, because it was intended to allow the citizenry to bear arms against external threats or oppressive government. But because the amendment uses the word 'citizens' not 'citizenry' what emerged was the right of the citizens to use arms against each other. And, of course, America went on to build one of the largest standing armies in human history, now spending more on its military than the next twenty countries of the world put together.

photo by citrus knightshade

A few people have commented since the Batman shooting about technological change. At the time that the second amendment was passed it was literally impossible for one person to carry out a mass shooting. The most sophisticated weapons available were muzzle-loading muskets. A skilled musketeer could manage one shot about every thirty seconds. The Batman killer had several weapons capable of more than a shot a second. The framers of the second amendment couldn't have foreseen such industrial-scale killing power.

But what is entirely foreseeable is that America will continue to be a violent society. And as long as America continues to glorify and reward mass murder then people like the ex-Army neo-nazi, Wade Page, the man who murdered five Sikhs in their temple in Oak Creek, Milwaukee, just a few days after the Batman shootings, will keep being able to get hold of guns and carry out racist massacres against ethnic minorities.

After all, it was how he was brought up.

Mar Bucknell

they went

because their open eyes could see no other way
their open eyes could see no other way
open eyes could see no other way
eyes could see no other way
could see no other way
see no other way
no other way
other way
way

(line from c. day lewis poem, the volunteer, inscribed on the international brigade memorial, london)

Paul Harrison

DIRECT ACTION TIPS

There are occasionally times and places when you have to do something very illegal and then try to get away. The ubiquity of surveillance cameras is making this harder, but not impossible.

The British police did some experiments in the 1970s on the reliability of eyewitness accounts. They staged a series of acted-out armed robberies and took eyewitness statements from people who had every reason to believe that what they had seen was real. The witness statements were close to useless. People didn't even get race and gender right, never mind height, build and dress. Don't believe the shit on TV cop shows about positive IDs of witnesses years later. It's just not true.

So if you are doing something in the city where you know you are going to be seen, and want to get away, wear something very conspicuous while you do the deed, and drop it in a bin, (not the ones nearest to the scene of the crime, obviously). This works better at night than in daylight. If they are looking for someone with short hair in a fluorescent green hat, then the bareheaded long-haired person can effortlessly pass through the police checkpoint. Tailor the details to your actual appearance, do the deed in disguise, but don't try to get away in disguise. It might be a bit hard to explain why you've got your hair tucked into your collar. Fashion gets weird, but we haven't seen that one yet.

Never underestimate the sexism of the cops. A pretty woman's smile can hide a multitude of direct action crimes. It's ugly politics, but if it keeps activists out of jail . . .?

Distraction by being temporarily very visible is not completely reliable as a method, especially with the tracking ability of CCTV, but it can still work.

Conversely, if you want to be invisible, a man and a woman together wearing lots of denim are almost invisible in three different ways: darkish denim is optically dull, so you can, literally disappear into the dark of the street; and it's culturally neutral, especially in Perth. No one is going to pick you as an activist just because you're in denim and no one is ever going to suspect a man and a woman together on the streets. Yes, it's using homophobia, but the question is simple: do you want to get away with it or not? If you think you're about to be sprung, just stop and kiss. It's even easy to fake it if you are heterophobic or just don't like the person you are with. Just hug, though kissing ads credibility.

Happy vandalism!

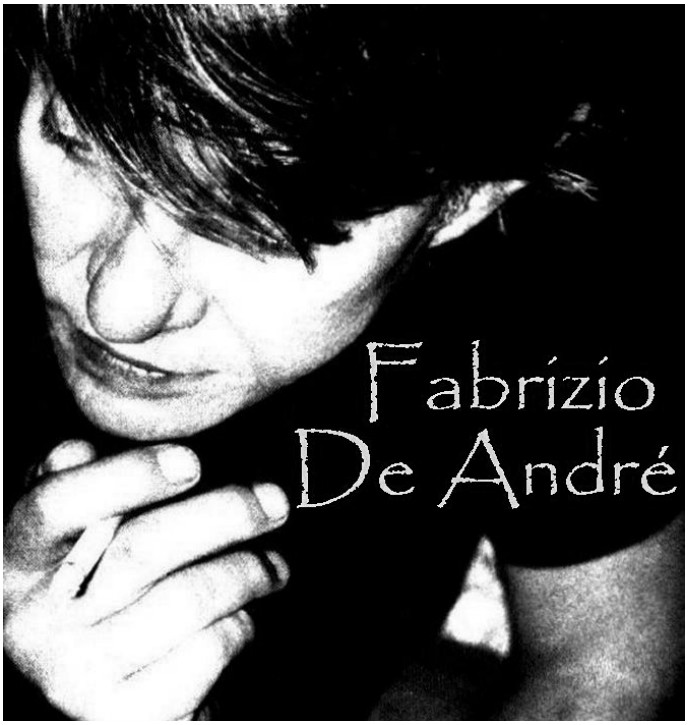
The Words of a Thief

Fabrizio De André's 'Titus' Will'

Fabrizio De André (1940–99) was an Italian singer/songwriter. Since his death, several schools, parks, streets and libraries have been named after him. While he is very famous in Italy, due, in particular, to his lyrics and to his ability to express deep concepts through the use of images and metaphors, to the extent that he is considered to be a poet, De André is still unknown outside the country. Fabrizio was an anarchist whose music was inspired by Georges Brassens, Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan. Through his songs he talked about people who are at the margins of society, thieves, prostitutes and junkies who, 'although they are not as beautiful as lilies, are children and victims of this world' (from 'La città vecchia').

The following lyrics are from Fabrizio's song 'Il Testamento di Tito' (Titus' Will), written in 1970 and taken from the album La Buona Novella (Glad Tidings), a collection of songs focusing on Jesus' life as it is told by the Apocrypha. Titus was one of the two thieves who were crucified together with Jesus. It was Titus who told the other thief not to mock Jesus in his agony. It was Titus who asked Jesus to be taken with him to the kingdom of heaven. Titus uses the Ten Commandments to criticise hierarchies and religions, hypocrisy and injustice, and finally to discover the key to love. In my opinion, these lyrics constitute a sort of libertarian manifesto against law and institutions, an anarchist perspective without mentioning the word 'anarchy'. Yet, for me as a translator, it was not easy to find a balance between literal translation and making sense in English. I hope I haven't 'violated' Fabrizio's song too much, and I also hope my Avenue friends will be able to enjoy it as I do, if not his music, at least Fabrizio's lyrics.

Rebelot



Titus' Will by Fabrizio De André

'Thou shalt have no God but Me', often made me think.
Other people from the east, said that it was just the same.
They believed in a different god, and they did not hurt me
They believed in a different god, and they did not hurt me

'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain'
When a knife pierced my side I cried out my pain
and cried out His Name
But maybe He was tired, maybe too busy today,
and He did not listen to my pain
But maybe He was tired, maybe too far away,
I really called His name in vain

'Thou shalt honour thy Father and thy Mother'
and honour their cane, too.
Kiss the hand that broke your nose
when you asked them for some food!
When my father's heart stopped beating, I did not feel remorse
When my father's heart stopped beating, I did not feel remorse

'Thou shalt hallow the Lord's holy days'
It was easy for a thief like me
to enter into the temples resounding
with psalms of slaves and their masters
without being tied to an altar, slaughtered like an animal
without being tied to an altar, slaughtered like an animal

The fifth says 'Thou shalt not steal' and perhaps I have observed
it when I silently cleaned out the pockets and purses
of those who had already stolen
But I was an outlaw and I robbed in my own name,
the others stole in the name of God
But I was an outlaw and I robbed in my own name,
the others stole in the name of God

'Thou shalt not commit impure acts',
that is, do not waste your semen.
Get a woman pregnant every time you love her,
so that you'll be faithful to God
Then lust fades away and the child remains,
how many will starve to death?
I have often confused my pleasure with love,
but I have not created sorrow

The seventh said, 'Thou shalt not kill'
If you want to go to Heaven
Well, see how this holy commandment is nailed
three times in the wood today
Look at this Nazarene dying in pain,
and a thief is dying in the same way
Look at this Nazarene dying in pain,
and a thief is dying in the same way

'Thou shalt not bear false witness'
and help them to kill a man, though
They know by heart the Law of God,
but they always forget about forgiveness
I have lied by God and by my honour, but I can't feel remorse
I have lied by God and by my honour, but I can't feel remorse

'Thou shalt not covet other people's things',
nor lust after another man's wife
Tell it to the few lucky men who have a woman and wealth
In other men's beds, already warm with love,
I didn't feel remorse
Yesterday's envy is not over yet, tonight I envy that you are alive

But now the evening and the darkness draw near,
Washing the pain from my eyes,
and the sun slips beyond the dunes to violate other nights,
I'm looking at this man dying, mother, and I'm now feeling grief.
Through pity, not bitterness, mother, now I have learned to love.

The original Italian lyrics can be found on our website:
www.unnamedavenue.org

Some Reflections on *Deep Green Resistance*

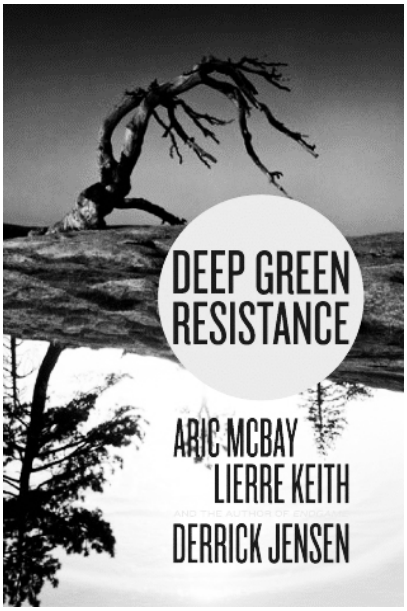
This is a deeply provocative and challenging book. It confronts readers with some starkly put choices, provides a barrage of uncomfortable and unpalatable facts without false optimism or 'positive' spin. It pulls no punches and slays many sacred cows of the left. Most will disagree violently with some aspect of the book. Yes, it is an uncomfortable read, and therefore deserves to be read and thought about deeply. Indeed I would classify this book as essential reading for the 21st century left.

My object here is not to provide a review, nor steal the authors' thunder, but to record my personal responses to and thoughts about the text. I read the book over the Christmas break, and have since then discussed it often: briefly with people who have not read it, extensively with some who have, and I have thought pretty hard and often about its message. So these thoughts are not immediate, knee jerk reactions, but are fairly considered.

I will begin by focussing on where I differ from the authors. While these points may read like a thoroughgoing rejection of their argument, I stress that it is not. I will then show why these differences are in fact irrelevant, and use their own arguments in support of this position. I will then move to what I really find valuable in the book, and suggest that these points are the crux of the matter and constitute an invitation to consider a practical agenda, a flexible attitude to tactics, which can in fact be detached from any particular larger world view or theoretical background. I will make some very broad suggestions as to how such an agenda could be advanced.

Let us start with the authors' conception of human history. In a nutshell, and in common with most deep green thinkers, they see the entire human civilizational project as flawed. The historical record of civilisations, they argue (and the term is not defined, but is clearly meant to encompass large-scale organised societies involving agriculture, urbanisation, a state, and an ideological or religious apparatus), is one of callous disregard for the life rights of other living species, of humans outside of those social boundaries and indeed even of most humans within those social boundaries, especially of women, people of different ethnic or racial backgrounds and most of the lower classes in general. Civilisation in their view has been characterised by the destruction of nature, exploitation and repression of the majority of humanity, warfare, violence and hideous sexist mental and physical abuse. As my sage grandfather used to put it, it is a record of legalised crime. Now, as an historian, I really can't argue with this depiction. It is in fact quite correct. As a generalised description it fits the empirical record well. What I disagree with are certain conclusions drawn from this which point to an underlying way of thinking, an epistemology, which I see as flawed.

As the authors see it, there is a simple choice between the destructive trajectory of civilisation and the return to a simpler, subsistence society. They do at times refer to population ideally being within the carrying capacity of the earth, and to a Palaeolithic technology. What they don't consider is that another form of civilisation may be possible. The history of all existing civilisations is simultaneously the history of class societies, in which



Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet
by Aric McBay, Lierre Keith, and Derrick Jensen

a small elite is able to extract the product of labour, the necessities and luxuries of life, from those who actually make them, and use their subsequent leisure time to invent and perpetuate ideological or religious justifications for their existence and develop and refine the techniques of extracting that wealth, controlling it and enforcing their will, i.e. a state. The authors would not disagree with that. Indeed they would likely say, yes, civilisation is a project of ruling classes. But my answer is: it need not be so.

We can imagine and envisage a civilisation not based on class rule and state power. Indeed, careful historical scholarship may even reveal various attempts to construct such societies. Some of these attempts may have been more or less successful in the short run and all were probably destroyed in the medium term (no surprise that), but if we write off those experiments as proof that the rulers always win, then we are effectively saying that history is only a record of the winners and that might is always right. And I suspect that is precisely the lesson the rulers of the world want us to draw.

I suggest this difference in perspective points to a differing epistemology. What I am suggesting is that the authors are led to these perspectives by their basis in the Anglo-American tradition of empiricism. It's the facts and only the facts that count. And the conclusions drawn are then the obvious ones: either, that's the way it is baby and get with the program, or toss out the baby with the bathwater. Were they grounded in what I would call a dialectical tradition, they would see facts as appearance, and be consequently concerned to find the essence beneath the facts; rather than stopping their analysis at an accurate general description of past human history, they would seek to find what has driven history in that way. Approaching the question along these lines leaves us open to finding an alternative answer to the riddle of history, and to the possibility of building a civilisation which does not behave in the historical way, because the dynamics are different.

Moving on from history we now come to a broadly political position. Given their particular approach, as I suggested above, the only real oppositional strategy left is the one the authors quite logically take: the rejection of civilisation in its entirety. Now they are very clear and lucid and logical in what this means. It means rendering the kind of lifestyle most of us live nowadays materially and technologically untenable. It means a world population a fraction of what it is now, perhaps 80 million people world wide. It means a return to subsistence economies. It means that a lot of people will die. The authors are sanguine about this, and this is a confronting position for the majority of humanity. People will die because medical infrastructure, drugs, and technologies will no longer be available. They acknowledge cheerfully that this will take out three of the authors. People will die younger as capacity to be carried into extreme old age will decline. And then there will be those who simply starve, succumb to shock and ennui, or are sadly killed in any resource struggle as the infrastructure of civilisation comes apart. I will return to the seeming horror of this position below, but for the moment I wish to focus on the main point of my disagreement, which is their model of how a future society should function: a return to the Palaeolithic.

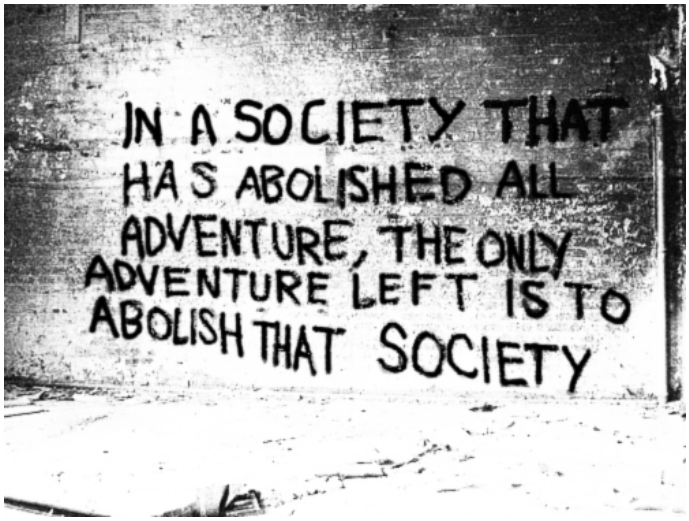
This seems to my reading of history to be something of a pipe dream, as ecological collapses have occurred in the past, but societies do not seem to have reverted so far back in general. But I acknowledge that within our current knowledge of ecology there are sound reasons why this may be desirable. It may in fact even happen regardless of what any of us want. But we also have to acknowledge that there are sound moral and personal reasons why most people would oppose this. To predicate a political movement upon the achievement of a goal which has very little chance of attracting much support seems to me counter-productive. Mobilising people requires a vision that they can feel some empathy for, a desire to achieve. It is a rare person who will support a goal which would mean their untimely death and that of their children too. For the record, I and some of my family would face early deaths due to the absence of medical infrastructure inherent in the deep green resistance model. I can however accept that and am not troubled by it, as I am more concerned for the survival and well-being of humanity as a whole than of my own genetic cluster). My disagreement here is thus primarily one of political impracticality.

At this point the authors and close supporters would probably criticise me for deriving their vision of the future from their diagnosis of history via an epistemology. And they would be quite right so to do. The book makes very clear that the arguments in favour of what I will call the Palaeolithic option are in fact ecological and preventative. Let me turn to these arguments quickly. Ecologically they point out that human civilisation is currently on a runaway program of ecocide. They point out, very rightly, that we are living in the middle of the sixth extinction event, and that around 200 species of life forms go extinct every day. Now while most species will always eventually become extinct (something like 99.9% of all species that ever existed are extinct) this rate is directly attributable to human agency and activity. Our civilisation is being maintained at the cost of wiping out 200 species per day which have as much right to ecological survival as we have. I have presented this argument to many people, and I must say it has the great virtue of forcing people to be honest about their position. "I don't care about a bunch of insects, frogs and algae" or "yeah well, humans are more important" are not uncommon responses. What this reveals is something the authors know already: that human society is deeply species-centric.

Rather than drawing comfort from this observation, we need to think about it. On what basis is this the case? Might is right? Humans can destroy the earth and all that is in it and therefore it's ok if we do it? How does species-ism differ from sexism or racism? The deep green argument is quite straight-forward: every species has the right to survive and flourish within its evolved ecological niche and at the carrying capacity of the food chain to support it. If it expands beyond that the normal processes of nature will trim its numbers, and this will continue until a change in the environment in the natural cycles of time renders that species' existence untenable. Now the current ecological crisis, the extinction rates, the climate change, the acidification of the oceans, pollution of the atmosphere, the degradation of water and soil, can all be seen as natural responses to curb the numbers of a species that has expanded to plague proportions. But the point is that human evolution has produced intelligence, awareness and the ability to be self reflective, to act consciously. As we have used those abilities to burst the normal bonds of nature, as it were, so we can use these abilities to restore them.

This leads to the second argument in favour of the Palaeolithic solution. That is, if nothing is done, if business as usual is allowed to continue, then we are likely to get there anyway, but in an awful fashion. People will not only die from the consequences of technological collapse, but the downward spiral of reduced resources and infrastructure will result in wars, mass migrations, desperate attempts to struggle for the means of existence. Brutality, violence, rape and mass death will proliferate. Hobbes' fantasy of pre-civilised life being nasty, brutish and short will come to fruition in the closing days of civilisation. And the survivors, traumatised and quite possibly the meanest and most selfish and brutal people of the lot, will face a devastated, depleted, polluted, poisoned world in which even breathable air may be at a premium.

This is a stark and bleak vision, and cynical intellectuals can laugh at what seems to be the latest fad in apocalyptic predictions. Except that a large number of very sober scientists share exactly the same vision, and the data can



certainly be seen to point that way. So the argument for a strategy to achieve a managed transition to a Palaeolithic solution is that it would be kinder, less disruptive and less brutal. After all, the authors point out, everyone does die, and under this model while some or many may die earlier, it will be less likely to be in as brutal and terrifying a manner. The main trajectory driving a lower future population under a managed, as opposed to a runaway, approach they suggest would in fact be the decline in the birth rate as reproductive cycles adjust to the resource base.

I lay out these arguments in some detail in fairness to the authors. I cannot find much to disagree with in the reasoning, except to stress again that their epistemology has led them to preclude the development of a different civilisation in which human intelligence can be used to rebuild and restore the bounds of nature and find a form of coexistence with a population, reduced from its present numbers, but in a way that does not condemn many millions to early death. The authors' arguments are, in my perspective, arguments for pursuing a goal of immediate fundamental change, not for a particular set outcome.

I want to stress here what I stated at the outset: that while the above sounds like an outright rejection, it is not and it is absolutely a theoretical argument and therefore basically irrelevant. That is a surprising statement I know, as by far the majority of disagreements among leftist are based on theory. The authors have a term for this: horizontal hostility. They argue that people in opposition to the system become frustrated by their incapacity to strike at it, to effect change, and hence turn that frustrated hostility on each other, finding reasons to argue, split and fight each other. I have absolutely no desire to do that or to contribute to that phenomenon. My personal view for a long time has been that most theoretical arguments are arguments because they are matters of interpretation; we simply do not know enough to resolve them. In time, however, we probably will. Let us therefore focus on creating a future through practical projects which necessitate co-operation and solidarity. Let us limit our agreements to more or less medium-term projects and work on those projects. Let the long term evolve out of what we do. When the theoretical problems become acute, we will probably find an answer anyway. And in the meantime, we will have learned to co-operate and trust each other, and can therefore handle disagreements on perspectives and opinions without casting out opponents in satanic garb.

Let us focus on creating a future through practical projects which necessitate cooperation and solidarity.

Back to Deep Green Resistance, and here is where the rubber hits the road. Their analysis of ecology leads to the core of the ethical challenge the authors throw at us. The entire world is living now, they suggest, in an analogy of Europe in 1943 under Nazi occupation: 200 species a day are being delivered to extinction, there is a holocaust occurring in our life times and what are we going to do about it? I can only applaud delivering a challenge in those terms. This is then the question: what is to be done? Here the book moves into its main purpose, the discussion of political tactics. It is the discussion of tactics, and more importantly the possible directions tactics may take, in which I see enormous potential for a project – or more correctly, a series of projects – for collaborative action that I mentioned above.

Earlier, I wrote that the authors slay many leftist sacred cows. Indeed their entire discussion of political strategy and tactics is grounded in this large scale and quite brutal housecleaning. They anchor their discussion of the contemporary left in one of the best analyses I have ever read of the contrast between the liberal and the radical mindsets and world views. This section of the book is superb, and is worth reading by all who consider themselves to be of the left; by the end of it many will come to the uncomfortable realisation that they are in reality liberals, and thus complicit in a social system committed to ecocide, exploitation and repression of fellow humans and the mass destruction of 200 species per day.

The authors also debunk the myth of the "alternative" or "counter culture", revealing its deeply compromising and proto-fascist roots in Imperial Germany and how the practitioners of this early youth culture transferred their ideology to the Americas. Many who operate in this paradigm may well be disconcerted by these sections. The ideologies of the old left come in for a lambasting too, including the myth of the masses: that mass popular movement of the mobilised people that has guided the thinking of union movement, the social democratic and the communist parties for the last century and more. Using historical and contemporary material, the authors establish that the majority of people do not mobilise or move until circumstances are so overwhelming that they have no option but so to do, and observe sadly that the masses are as likely to be swayed to a reactionary as a revolutionary path. In the context of a dying planet, if we wait until the evidence is overwhelming it will be too late; too late for what is left of the natural world and too late for us.

The point that the book raises starkly, I stress again, is this: there is a holocaust in our lifetimes, happening now. What is each individual one of us going to do about it? How do we prevent another 200 species being delivered into extinction tomorrow?

The strategy the authors endorse is the growth of a grassroots culture of resistance, based initially on the activity of the committed few, who will reach out and recruit more. They envisage such a resistance taking an aboveground form and possibly an underground form. They do not see these two forms as being linked, co-operating or communicating in any way. The former will continue being involved with all the 'normal' activities of political protest and green activism, but will also – and this is crucial – act as a moral, political and public force of approbation for the underground. Basically, above-ground resisters need to be willing to endorse and speak for the actions of those necessarily clandestine underground resisters, without being involved in anyway in knowing, planning or being consulted on the latter group's activities.

The example used constantly is that of the European resistance during the Second World War, especially in France. Another example is from the Irish War of Independence. There the underground forces — the IRA — could count on a public opinion that would endorse their actions, pointing out that however unpleasant the shooting and ambushing of police and soldiers was, or the

burning of buildings or whatever, it was to be expected that people would be driven to such acts by the ongoing foreign occupation of the country. That, basically, the best way to bring an end to armed resistance was for the British to leave, or in the European context, for the Nazis to surrender. So in this scenario, an act of resistance involving, say, the sabotage of a power station, would not be met with well meaning but ultimately liberal waffle about deplorable violence and non-violence being the way, but the statement that as long as the social and economic system continues to condemn 200 life forms to death per day, some people are going to be angry enough to blow things up, and that the best way to stop them doing that is to stop industrial civilisation in its tracks. In other words, if you are going to mentally sign up for above-ground resistance, you have to be prepared to speak for the underground resistance no matter what.

The point that the book raises starkly is this: there is a holocaust in our lifetimes, happening now. What is each of us going to do about it?

All of which leads us to the underground resistance and the tactics such groups could conceivably choose. The argument is that far from being monolithic and all-powerful, industrial civilisation is actually quite fragile. Careful strategic and infrastructure analysis reveals that industrial civilisation depends upon a flow of materials and energy, and much of this is channelled through key choke points, or is concentrated in key areas. These areas are significant strategic targets, and if they can be disrupted and damaged often enough, eventually the cost of repairing, restoring and protecting them will overwhelm the system. The strategy that such a hypothetical underground resistance may choose is one of attrition, hitting targets over and over again, while simultaneously having to survive what will be massive exercises in state repression. And even if a target — let us say a dam — is rebuilt, at least for a while a river system continues to function without impairment, and various species of plants and animals gain a few months reprieve.

Let me give an example of how I imagine such a strategy would work in my home town of Perth, Western Australia. Perth is like southern California, a hot, dry semi-desert Mediterranean environment. It functions as a modern city of nearly 1.5 million people by virtue of massive power use to drive air-conditioning systems, lots of fossil fuels to ferry people around a city that sprawls 150 km by 60 km and profligate overuse of water to keep nice green shady gardens. Remove those amenities and the place is pretty unbearable in summer. Power is delivered to Perth predominantly from three generating stations. If those stations could be rendered inoperable in summer, repeatedly, a population exodus would occur and a significant strain on the local environment would be removed. That is the kind of action an underground resistance would be looking at.

. . . says 'Anything a police officer does is legal. Honest. Trust me.'

In the north of this state is the Kimberley region, a remarkable, and still largely intact, area. Off the coast lies the breeding ground for migrating whale populations, now threatened by offshore drilling. Imagine a local resistance group taking a leaf out of the book of the very effective resisters in the Niger Delta who use speedboats to launch raids on Shell drilling rigs and blow them up. Their slogan: 'Leave our land or die in it.' Or how much more impact the movement to preserve the ancient rock art on the Burrup peninsula from the development of the gas processing facilities would have had, if regular sabotage had also been in the arsenal?

Of course this kind of discussion, even hypothetical, is shocking and anathema to most of the green left, because it is, well, violent, and non-violence is a shibboleth. That's another of the sacred cows the authors take on, and I shall let you read their arguments for yourself. The point they make is that non-violence and armed resistance are tactics, and the choice of tactics depends on the context. Make one or the other into a principle and you limit your capacity. Indeed, making something into a principle may well be a very liberal step to take. There is no easy or quick answer; it is something every individual and every group would need to work out for themselves. What are our operating principles? What are our limits? How far are we willing to go to save the planet?

Here I come to what I explicitly like about this book, and why I think it should be read. It is precisely this discussion of tactics, this openness to examine all options, including the morally uncomfortable. The willingness to criticise accepted truth and doctrines directly and overtly; the fact that the book forces the reader to think very hard and clearly about what they really want to achieve when faced with these hard questions. Which side am I really on? It is confronting and challenging, and if there is one thing the left needs now above all else, it is to be confronted and challenged by some hard questions, by unpalatable truths and by harsh reality.

As I used to say to my students at the end of the courses I taught on white supremacism and on globalisation: it does not matter to me personally if you go away from this determined to grab what you can and to hell with the consequences, or to be a good reformist and tinker around the edges hoping that something will turn up to make it all better. The point is you now know the score, you know the price tag of those choices. By all means try to reconstruct your comfort zone after this. But another word for a comfort zone is a rut; and a rut is a grave with the ends knocked out. That is where the left collectively is. It needs a wake up call, and this book provides that call. Read it: disagree with it, reject it if you want, but read it anyway.

Bitter Pills

Michelle Braunstein

The mocking eye of a closed circuit camera and I are alone together inside the elevator. Grateful for the chance to have anxiety in peace, I dizzy myself with my own reflections in the mirrored walls. A few deep breaths, lips puffed out like a fish and I feel slightly less ill.

Falconer Pharmaceuticals

glares pompously from its brass plate above the elevator buttons and a wistfully melodic tune is piped in over invisible speakers:

What did you learn from your time in the solitary?
Cell of your mind there was noises, distractions
From anything good and the old prison food
Colour my life with the chaos of trouble
'cause anything's better
Than posh isolation

Straightening my wig in the mirror it occurs to me suddenly that the thin layer of fat from my fingertips has bonded my destiny to the "up" button in the foyer, and the 6th floor button inside the lift.

I missed the bus, you were laid on your back
With the boy with the Arab strap,
With the boy from the Arab Strap

Since reading somewhere that pressing the "close" button does not make elevator doors close any faster, I no longer engage in such pointless activity, so that's one less print to worry about. Nevertheless, it is too late for the others. I stare at the pads of my bare fingertips, micro-panopticons oracular.

It's something to speak of the way you are feeling
To crowds there assembled, do you ever feel you have gone too far?

Ding!

The doors open revealing the edge of the elevator flush with plush salmon coloured carpet on the 6th floor. I step out and find myself staring up into the mirrored aviators of a steroidal security guard who stands facing the lifts. Her brass name tag is engraved with

Falconer Pharmaceuticals

and 'Cheryl' beneath. My cheap blonde wig, no better than a fancy dress party joke frames my desperate face badly and my painted red lips twitch nervously as I ask for John's office. Cheryl is impassive. She doesn't suspect a thing.

I follow her lumbering form down a dimly lit hallway of closed doors marked with shiny black numerals. We stop at number 68. 'I owe you one', I imagine joking with John and immediately roll my eyes at myself. Cheryl raps on the door, her knuckles small white dimples in hammy flesh.

'Yup?'

A muffled voice replies. Cheryl opens the door and John, seated at a large black desk waves me in with a ringed hand. He has a phone tucked between his ear and shoulder. He is typing, laughing madly and talking simultaneously.

'Nice guys don't get the corner office! Eh? Am I right?!' He nods at Cheryl who closes the door behind me with a click. The walls of his office are bare, but for a generic-looking framed picture of a waterfall. Seated with his back to a small window obscured by sagging venetian blinds, through which stripes of dirty light filter, John pecks at a laptop with one hand. Beside the laptop, three coloured monogrammed Falconer Pharmaceuticals pens are fanned on the desk and I am momentarily dazzled by their brightness. A small teak bookshelf stands on the left-hand wall holding titles I recognise from when we lived together – Sun Tzu's Art of War, Heidegger's On Being and Time, something about raw food, poems by Kathy Acker, several by Murakami and a book on revolutionary poster art I had acquired for him back when we used to do apartment clean-ups together, after the diseases wiped out the cities. On the top shelf, advertising and marketing texts' spines shine with glossy, banal titles.

Our eyes connect and in John's a flicker of warmth, despite his newly concocted self, makes me nauseously sentimental. He closes prosaically – 'email me' 'lunch' 'definitely' before hanging up the phone and turning his attention to me.

'Margo, nice hair. How are you?'

'Thanks Johnny. Pretty good. You?'

He makes no move towards standing and embracing me. I sit down opposite him on a black office chair with padded arm rests. Its ergonomic design is disarmingly comfortable and I find myself briefly wondering if I have made the wrong decision as I sink my spine into its plump seat. John chuckles.

'It's not too late. I can get you a position.'

And then I am certain I haven't.

'No way man'

I begin to chew at some uneven thumbnail.

'So it's all working out for you then?'

He inquires jovially.

'It's all good now, yeah. You should come and hang out at the warehouse.'

'As if! They all know I work here don't they?'

'They wouldn't care.'

‘Bullshit. Do you...do they know...you’re here...now?’

John’s eyes have deadened and his attention has been absorbed by whatever is on his computer screen. He mechanically strokes his mouse with his middle finger.

‘I don’t know. Do you care?’

As I watch him, the memory of a textile artwork we had once found in a hipster’s apartment returns suddenly. I had taken a particular liking to the work and had kept it for our bedroom. It had depicted the figure of a woman sewn onto a canvas, wearing a tragic expression and a floral patterned dress. At the top of the canvas stitched in block letters had been the question ‘Where Has Love Gone?’ and at the bottom in identical lettering, ‘By the author of “Where Love is”.’ I scratch my head beneath my wig which draws John’s awareness back to my presence.

‘Did you say something? Sorry Margo! I’m just, you know...’

His eyes are on me briefly before they wander back to the computer monitor.

‘Sure. I get it. It’s fine... I...it is better this way. I’m happy. You seem...happy here.’

I stare curiously at his face while I speak, but it is blank.

‘Yeah, totally. Sooo, what have you got for me?’

He asks, eyes still locked fast to the screen.

‘How about this: ‘The best things about sex on the astral plane are no disease, no unwanted pregnancies and no emotions.’’

‘Hmmm. Interesting.’

He looks up from the computer and stares at a spot on the wall behind me, sucks in his cheeks and rhythmically flicks his jaw with his middle finger five or six times before finally looking directly at me.

‘I reckon, Margo, at this early stage in the product’s brand life, we probably want to steer away from using the term “astral plane”. It’s too spacey for most people. Too spiritual? Crystals and white light, all that shit. The people who are really into that stuff won’t touch our product anyway.’

‘Yet. But surely that’s a whole market that you could tap? A lot of the sweat-lodge howling wolf crew would love the chance to roam freely, sleep with whoever they want, commune with dead relatives... all in the safety of their own head, slash pharmaceutically induced multidimensional experience. Beats Second Life!’

‘Yeah it’s a fair point. But it’s not really my area. I’ll shoot an email to segmentation, they’ll have a better idea. You got anything else?’

I pull my spiral bound notepad from my handbag and flick through it hastily until I find where I have scrawled:

Take love, don’t make love

Let’s get post-physical!

Get your dream-body groove-on

I rip the page out and slide it across the desk. He snatches it up greedily and reads it through a thick lashed squint.

‘Ha! Reckon I might be able to use some of these.’

Sick anxiety hits as I remember why I’m here.

‘Great. I’m sorry to be blunt, but I’m going to need some cash.’

‘Of course. Margo. Come on! What do you think I am?’

He opens a desk drawer, pulls out an envelope and pushes it across the desk. I slide it into my bag while watching his face for the right moment to ask him.

‘Should be enough for you till next month, when we have a new product I’m hoping you’ll workshop with me.’

‘Cheers. What is it?’

‘It deals specifically with peoples’ sense of injustice about social inequity’

‘Are you fucking kidding me?’

‘Yeah. But nah. They don’t necessarily want to market it that way, but they reckon it’s been really effective for people with Oppositional Defiant Disorder, to tone down their behaviour. It’s been trialled in the prisons and detention centres with great results. Next target market is people like you and your mates.’

I splutter and shake my head. Hot tears, laughter, a scream. I swallow them. Because I’m grateful for the opportunity to segue.

‘Jesus, John. Ok. That one’s going to cost you.’

‘What do you need?’

‘Philip Falconer’s home address.’

(Song lyrics from ‘The Boy with the Arab Strap’ by Belle and Sebastian 1998)

For a Change in Consciousness

'All indigenous people do is sit around, drink, and do nothing,' quipped the educated, middle-aged woman sitting in front of me.

I sat there embarrassed and not sure how to respond. Initially, I was thinking 'How can she say that?' but before I knew it the conversation had shifted and, without pausing, she had moved on to another topic. Looking back on that one statement conversation, I regret not critiquing her on what seemed to be the result of many assumptions and a few negative experiences. What follows are some questions and thoughts that, given the time again, may have been productive for the both of us.

'All indigenous people do is sit around, drink, and do nothing.'

Who are you referring to when you say indigenous people? What do you mean when you say that all they do is sit around and drink? What do you mean by 'do nothing'?

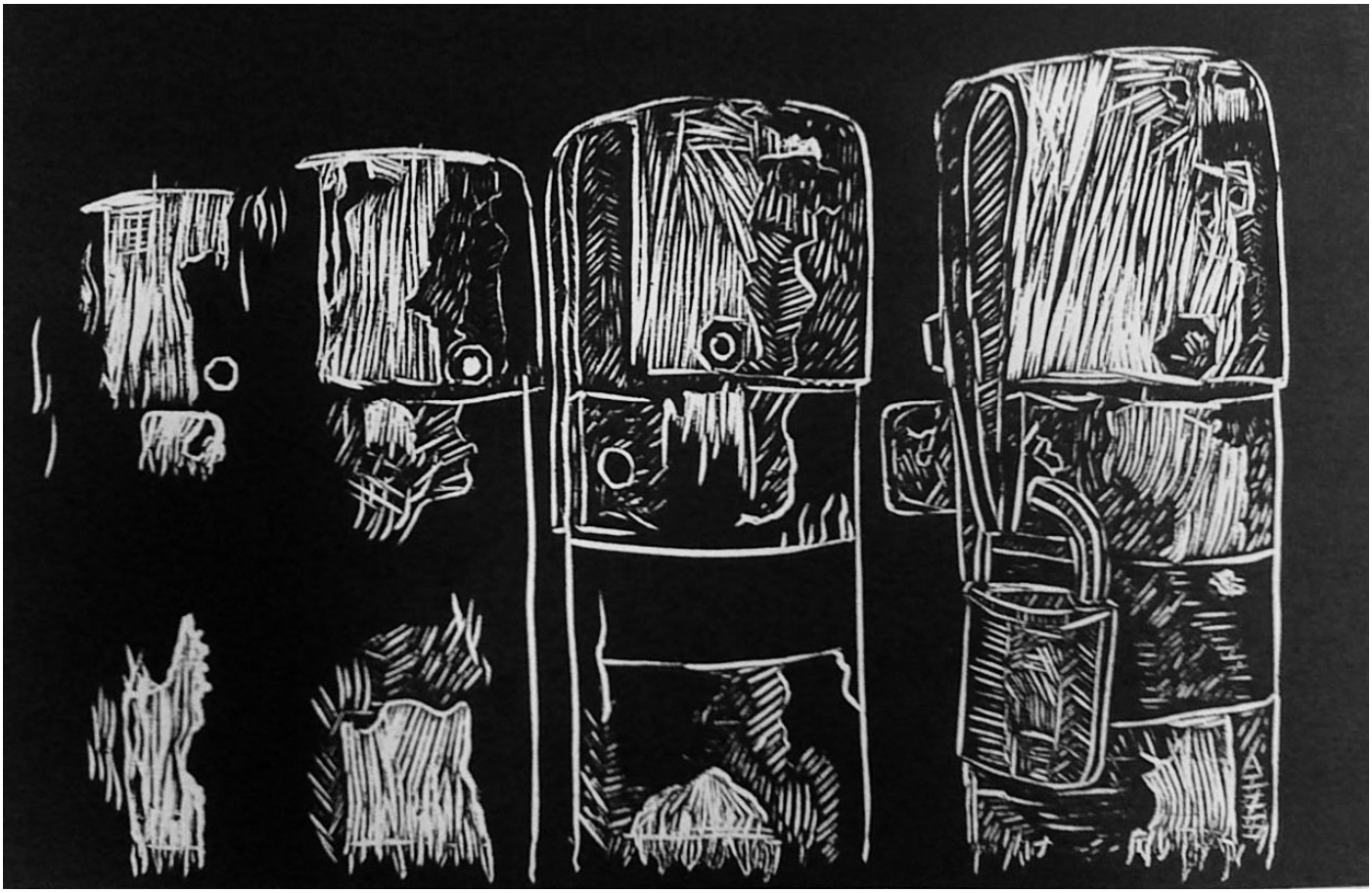
These questions are valuable because they show how easy it can be to take sweeping statements for granted. Is it any wonder that misunderstandings so often ensue when words that are rarely considered in and of themselves are used to construct such loaded statements? We develop our opinions with such speed and certainty that often things become connected when they should sit separately. For instance, there are no doubt many indigenous people who don't 'sit around, drink, and do nothing', so to speak, who are none the less connected to this statement due to their race. This is why, in making such connections we can find ourselves with perspectives and opinions that others may call thoughtless, prejudiced, or ill considered.

To make my argument clearer, let's think of our understandings as pieces of rope.

Each topic may be an individual rope that we tie to others to form a coherent perspective. Of course, we don't do this on our own; we are bombarded with inputs that attempt to tie these topics together for us: an advertisement shows a sports car with a beautiful woman draped over it or the standard money equals happiness sales pitch. We make connections from these statements, tying knots, binding together a bunch of disparate ropes. Once such ropes are tied together, they form the fabric of our views, giving us the opinions we use to present ourselves. It can be applied to just about everything that you have ever thought, and we often carry them without even realising. It is through thoughtfulness that we can undo these knots and pull such ropes apart.

Let's take this woman's statement about indigenous people as an example. Race may be one rope, tied to this rope may be this woman's experience of a certain group of people, and tied to that rope are her values, in this instance, based around alcohol consumption and work.

Three ropes — race, tied to experience, tied to values. Let's pull this particular phrase apart and be thoughtful together. Firstly, when we talk about 'All' people, especially those



'spawn' by Julian Conception

of a different background to ourselves, it often means 'some people from that group who I have met or seen'. It almost never means 'All' in the true sense of every single person from this group. In reality, 'All indigenous people', in Australia, means several hundred groups with diverse language, culture and country. Hence, to refer to "All indigenous people" is to refer to an enormous group.

This part is perhaps where ropes are tied the strongest. We often connect what we experience through the small number of individuals who we then take to be indicative of a whole group. It is an unfair representation and also makes a mockery of the diversity that generally exists within any sort of group to begin with.

The second part of 'sitting around' goes together with the 'doing nothing'. Breaking this down even further, we can look at the assessment of what constitutes sitting around and doing nothing, at the same time, looking at our values on whether this is a positive or negative activity. It is often assumed that unless you are in a state of activity, such as work or exercise, it means that you are 'doing nothing', which in turn may be associated with laziness, leisure, and countless other connotations.

Again, there are a few approaches to unbinding this knot. The main one is to look at the vastly different values that different cultures place on various activities. Many indigenous peoples come from oral traditions. In other words, they didn't write things down. It was then very important to pass on knowledge through speech, often resulting in stories, deep ways of passing on the history and wisdom to others. Outwardly, people doing this will look as if they are sitting and talking, which may in turn may seem like 'doing nothing'. Yet, this is an intrinsic, important part of many cultures. In many parts of the world, sitting and 'doing nothing' is revered. Buddhist monks are looked upon with respect for their dedication to the practise of sitting. This in fact takes tremendous concentration and skill, being still and watching one's internal processes. Yet in many respects, this can also be regarded as sitting and 'doing nothing'. What sitting and 'doing nothing' is depends on your perspective. Whether it is desirable and worthwhile depends largely on the values that you place on it.

The last knot to untie is that of drinking and the consumption of alcohol. Imagine if you met someone from a non-Australian background who might have heard of the amount of alcohol use in Australia and said 'All Australians drink and get drunk'. Imagine that this person also backs up this statement with how in his country (let's say Thailand) he has seen hundreds of drunk Australians. I would imagine that there would be at least a part of you that disagrees with this. Ask yourself why you disagree? Being a witness to a particular behaviour of a group does not mean that it is a reflection of the group at large. It does not even necessarily reflect the ongoing and habitual behaviour of the group that you are witnessing.

It is safe to say that not 'All' indigenous Australians drink alcohol to excess. It is also safe to say not 'All' of them 'sit around and do nothing'. Awareness of what ropes tie things together allows for understanding of how we form our opinions and thereby reach certain conclusions. When we can analyse these ropes and the strength of the knots that bind them, it makes us aware that our "facts" may not be as concrete as they may seem initially. Factors that hold these knots together are numerous; culture, media, upbringing, environment. But out of all of these the most central and most flexible, is ourselves, or more specifically our 'conscious' and 'thoughtful' selves. The first step is to bring forth this awareness of what is being tied together. Next, ask ourselves whether it makes sense for them to be linked. And most importantly, be aware of 'who' is doing the tying. With this, I then encourage you, when you see someone tying ropes too brazenly, such as the woman mentioned above, instead of writing an article about it, be braver than me and question the strength of her knots.

Jason Lim

ALMOST THE NEWS...

Qantas has launched its new advertising slogan: 'You're the reason we fly.' A spokesbastard for the company said that focus-group testing found that it had better public acceptance in Australia than 'We'll soon call Singapore home.'

A British police officer has been cleared of manslaughter over the death of a newspaper seller who was walking home from work near the G20 protests in London in 2009. Constable Simon Harwood bashed Ian Tomlinson with a truncheon from behind without warning more than 100 metres from the police exclusion zone. The Southwark Crown Court ruled that Harwood had used reasonable force to kill an innocent bystander.

The First Baptist Church of Crystal Springs, Mississippi has defended the decision by Pastor Stan Weatherford to refuse to marry a black couple in the church. 'We're not racist,' said the leader of the congregation. 'We've been allowing black folks to sit up the back of the church for nearly two years now.'the law.

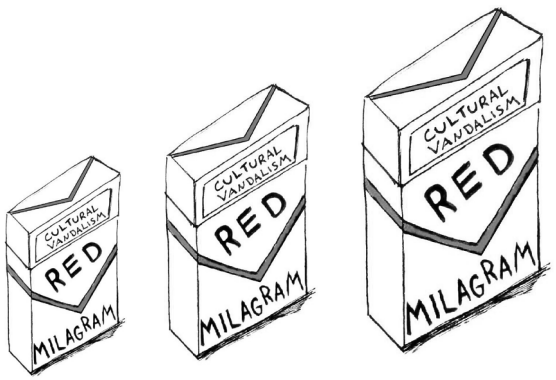
The City of Perth has started using its signage by-laws to fine beggars who hold up pieces of cardboard saying 'I'm homeless and hungry. Please help.' CEO Frank Edwards said that issuing fines of $100 to people who had no home, no money and no income was the only logical way to solve the problem. 'If people are looking at cardboard signs held up by hungry people,' he said, 'they might not notice the ads for BHP and Woodside. Who's to say that the beggars outside McDonald's in William Street won't put people off their food? We have standards to uphold.'

Harmony

Raymond Grenfell

1. the cross stitch of the old-left hook thrown as hegemonic struts at police tanks pranking black mask kids in white coffee squats with televised pauses for the sycophants in the force cracked by the sons and daughters turning against the obese ex-lawyer hacks of the middle class who mistakenly pushed out thugs with hoodies, sneakers and bricks — wired eyed kids riding 'til red and shouting in farsi to refused generations of 3 to 5 percent, ready to cage the universal and scream for buddha or malatesta, ready to remind your rich opaque cunt that its lips still can't digest money, the riot or burning trees. But the bottle of kerosine needs clenched fists not ivory toned circle-jerks, liberals up against the wall and tofu dreaded pricks. The poly-autonomous being with dreams of giant bears cuddling kittens, stolen dragons with torn wings from streams of sunlight reflected on the back of a moon yet discovered and soon misplaced so as to collect pebbles of men with silk shirts and holes in hearts unable to stand in shifting yellow seas of geishas opening themselves with mishima's knife to bear slurring youth with violent eyes now subdued in this forgotten land and demanding the new boring revolution.

2. the day in day out ego driven dribble down the side of cheeks swollen from chocolate pudding and the prayers of distant cityscapes are wounds demanding to be fed flaccid ecstasy — push/pull arse/mouth. And even on the twelfth floor there are monsters hiding under our skin, our own bodies rejecting this key-tapping tick-tocking pixel nausea. Heroic public servants, secret widows of infertile fathers, not shadows but lost in distant caves of the other, projecting insulated children into a spectacular space. Whereas, elongated fingers and small perversions made from eternal closets and cheap commodities are shipped in russian doll houses, chinese whores with soft manicured hands placed carefully on stained knickers in swept stalls, upper management big men with recliners worth more than the village of dry dirt and oil residue wanking themselves daily. The big R reality of the Capital T truth, the poor dispossessed fill our stomachs with much more than minced meat, strangled dolphins and peasant bones in unmarked graves. Here in our ground we wait to be paved over with the worker's muscle, the pale grey tongue suckling on the last sour drops of progress, our flesh giving birth to the border. And looking toward the horizon we see but do not hear a billboard announcing repetition: a slow lonely deaf man eating his own head.



. . . meanwhile, outside Yongah Hill Detention Centre at Northam . . .

3. the liberated holding true to one note scribbled in the back of bars, bedrooms and the riddled wombs of tao. Closed fist for the aching body and open hand for the stoned flooding of this unborn metaphor, twisted soul and open prison, an alchemy order to mind the matter and spit spirit through meta. Our serenity rising with the tides of the moon living in this palm. A secret scar. Psalm. Dancing sutra. The ancestors of anarchistic ghosts scattered in waves of sound. Lucy reminding us of the angelic god that discarded our star personally to make love to lunar shapes, halted consciousness that united with the primordial and it still hasn't cut your leather jacket in the rain as the room leaves the window outside with the sea swelling inside the volume of the throat, bringing one lotus at a time to shaking legs, thighs and the weeping dirt that gave rise to this poet. But below the weather, underground the humming, there is no above or world to hold purple fears of collision, nothing to let go of and no where to fall.

4. the return, cyclical atoms bracing the rapture in pictures — street-scapes and paved faces. Passing by the clothed gentry shuffling hour to minutemen. There where there are still too many willing to compromise their own reflection to save a projection of wealth, status and an opportunity to fuck someone else over. This self — created, an abyss turned monster, the mirror shattered battered and broken on the steps of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, a monument to light eternal, this wounded child inside holding close to the inferno, close to the mother's breast. A history of torment and exploitation. Lest we forget all things are not relative, figurative forms on limestone walls breaking necks to forget that we come from the same dust, we suck on the rotting mechanics turned to rust but all eventually decays and unicorns still exist if thought is matter and mind to preach manners with energy condensed to a series of syllables to tell you to harden the fuck up and watch the images dissipate the foreign. And maybe we will stop long enough to enjoy the sight of violet bayonets catching the moonlight as the sun waits patiently to consume this world. Leaving us here, holding this beautiful form — once and for all.

The Freebird Syndrome

Lust and desire are the drivers of this train

In the month of October 2010, a young man named Reuben Huntley began walking along the Great Eastern Highway just outside of Perth. With a backpack and swag on his back and his arm stretching out a pointed thumb, he awaited his first ride. Destination – Melbourne. Upon his return, he began writing a tale based upon his adventures, which he has now self-published under the title The Hitch. *I decided to catch up with Reuben and find out what inspires him to lead a life less ordinary, and hear tales from his adventure across the continent….*

I sat with Reuben on the sixth-floor balcony of his apartment rental on Beaufort St, getting comfy with a glass of red and hand-rolled smoke before delving into his story. At twenty-six, Reuben Huntley looks more like nineteen. With curly blonde hair and sun-bleached skin, he could easily be mistaken for your stereotypical young surfy larrikin. As it turns out, he is far from any stereotype or concept of typical. It isn't very often that I feel as uplifted and inspired as I did later that day walking home.

I had decided I wanted to interview Reuben not long after we had our first chance-conversation. We had bumped into each other once previously and ended up exchanging numbers for a chance to catch up properly. Each time we tried though, someone was busy, and usually me. For some reason it seemed like the thing to do to make sure it happened. In the end it was a barbecue in the park that brought us together. Here Reuben told me about a recent adventure he had undertaken. He had his girlfriend drop him off one afternoon at the Perth Great Eastern Highway, and from there proceeded to walk along. His destination: Melbourne city. He had an outlook on life that I admired and already I knew this. As we spoke he was awaiting the arrival of the first copies of his story 'The Hitch' based upon his experience hitching across this great expanse of land. Like the journey itself, the book was an impulsive decision that he made happen.

So Reuben. Was this the first major hitch-hike that you have undertaken? What other hitchhiking journeys have you been on?

That was definitely one of the epic ones I've done, but I've hitchhiked around Tasmania with a friend. And some travels in Canada and America.

When did you start to travel like this and take life as an adventure?

I left school after completing my high-school diploma at the age of 18. Decided to get away and get outta that comfort zone, culture myself, so to speak, and so left on a mission to go around the world on a round-the-world ticket. Stopped in the States, travelled there, then Toronto, Vancouver, around the Rockies, I stayed for the snowboard season, then to London, Scotland and Spain through to Bangkok. Travellin's in my blood.

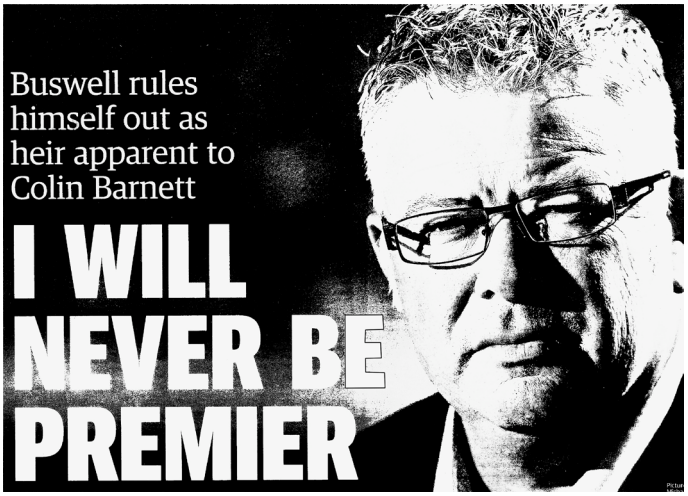
What inspired you to have such an outlook on life. Particularly at such a young age?

It was kind of a build-up of the whole of life. Just a lot of things. A lot of religious letdowns came to play within the family. I realised there was no one helping anyone except the family around you, but that's all fighting and politics, sometimes you can't stand it, and my reaction was to get out and let them do their thing. My thing being something quite different. I'd rather liberate my soul than stick around talking pointless arguments or whatever it may be.

It's quite inspiring that, (especially at such a young age) you would face that kinda thing in such a positive manner. Travelling the world as opposed to say, losing yourself in drugs, or shitty social circumstances, the kind of understandable frustration, but not moving forward from there. Did you embrace solitude to an extent before? Or was this something you learnt to appreciate on travelling?

I definitely learned that upon travelling yeah … I was always quite a social person, but there's … I dunno …You see people around you, people you love, going mental, suicides … Then you think, well there's good influence coming from parents in that sense, keeping me away from that, but even that's coming from a negative sense of religion, and that's not doing anything for me. And that created a little kick in my head, like a little motor thinking — 'well it doesn't seem like any cats know how to get out of this …' The mundane prescription reality. Here I was, 18 and confused, thinking; well the parents don't seem to know how to get out, they can't escape any of this, and they haven't gotten the free bird syndrome, and here they are preaching to me. They can show me the way but they aren't free. Maybe I should just take my own path, discover it for myself.

. . . and they say there's never any good news in the mass media . . .



It can be a big thing to realise your parents are just people. If it was ever there, you take them down off that pedestal a bit. Is there one defining thing in particular that you took away from that first experience of travel? How did it affect you in yourself and your equilibrium?

The ability to be able to do what I want and when I want. What I like to call the free bird syndrome, where you can just literally pack up in the night and go stay in the park if that's what you wanna do. You don't let people shut down your little adventures, the biggest thing is when I realised I was free to live. When I'm away I stay in touch by e-mail, but not over phone. There's that being unable to be contacted that affects exactly what I was doing, which was, y'know, no limits, no real pre-direction, I could just do it and not worry about offending someone, or someone being worried. You just do it and then you can keep to yourself about what you want and don't want them to know. It's up to you. You don't tell them what they don't wanna know.

I guess it's gotta be at least a little scary for parents when you're on the other side of the world hitching around alone. What was the balance like between the excitement and the nerves when you first took off alone at the age of eighteen? I can imagine there might have been quite a cocktail of emotions going on there.

Yeah definitely. The nerves were exhilarating. Sky high, y'know. On the plane with a new life already. At the same time surreal though. It didn't sink in until I found myself in a whole new country for the first time in my life with no one and nothing. I felt like little Hucky Finn, it just had me by the balls from day one.

How would you describe your spiritual outlook now, if any?

The name I have is dream-time. Because what you have is your dreams, and that's often the best possible outcome, your real dreams are the best thing that could possibly happen in affect. So in my state I don't rely on any God or anything. I kinda put all those mystical things aside and get on with my dream-time. That's the shit were you go to sleep and y'know, instead of thinking I wish I could do that. You just do it. You scrimp and you save and you confine yourself and save those pennies and just do it. Someday you're gonna get a shock when you roll over and you're dead. It only goes down in a second. Forget 'I wish I coulda done this' or 'I wish I'd done that', the whole idea of dream-time is not regretting a thing, taking each day as if it were treason.

It sounds like the constrictions of organised religion have played some part in things. Perhaps made quite a big impact on you growing up. Would you say you've encountered a spirituality aside of organised religion?

The best way I can describe it is by the old cliché of follow your heart. It was just the desire driving the train.. All the way. It was kinda the instantaneous desire of if you want something, do it. If your not affecting anyone and it's inside of your morals. Just get outside there an do it. Don't talk the talk without walking, so to speak.

How much of *The Hitch*, your-book that's based upon your hitch across the continent, would you say is autobiographical, and how much is pure fiction?

I like to think that it's not autobiographical at all. Although it's all obviously inspired by that trip, especially the thoughts and philosophies behind it had been conjuring for

sometime. I never really documented names, I used little tricks with my imagination to construct or reconstruct those … I remember one dude though, named Bailey, you'll read about him. Other than that I can't really remember names. There's a lot of factual-fiction in there, pulled straight outta the travel.

Well, how much of this story was pulled from things that you actually wrote on the road. How much was pulled up or constructed later?

Hmm … well that's a tough question actually. I tried to write most days. There was a goal to write at least a page each day in a diary, but there was so much going on each day, in the walking between car-rides, and then when you do get a ride you kinda feel the obligation, and goodwill to kinda get to know or at least have a chat with the person driving you … So there wasn't a lot of writing going on, and it was sleep time after that, and y'know, fire and marshmallows.

How long did you spend planning or procrastinating in relation to taking this journey before you actually took off from Perth?

It was initially a dream, y'know, to do something cool. And mine was to hitch from East to West or West to East. I got jack of work one day, and then there was the space of about a week where I said — Yeah I'm going. I just told one person and then I was gone. Puff … into the openness. There wasn't a lot of planning involved. There was a week of getting excited and then the excitement struck me down the road.

Was there anything you can think of that you got out of the journey that you didn't expect?

There was this random Russian hitchhiker that I met. He turned out to be a character and a half. He's in the book so I don't wanna give too much away, but it was amusing bumping into him in the middle of a twilight setting, smack in the middle of nowhere. I'd just got outta the end of a ride, and there he was with this little fold-up bicycle. I think other than this or that though, there was really nothing out of the ordinary. There were no muggings or murders. Nothing too 'outta the blue'.

What would you most hope people to take away from the experience of reading your book?

Well, I guess firstly, I would hope they enjoyed it, that they found it an entertaining read. Assuming that they did, I would hope they find it inspiring in their own lives, to think outside of the box. There's nothing quite like the dream-time! Too many people live in the prescribed reality. I find that sad.

In total, Reuben's journey took him six days and nights (including two nights spent in Adelaide). He had originally planned to hitch his way back again, however, situations arose in Perth that required him to make haste.

The Hitch *is available at McQueens Books in Fremantle and at Planet Books, Mt Lawley. Despite a few minor editing errors, it is an uplifting, entertaining and inspiring read. Copies are ten dollars and may well spread the 'free-bird syndrome' your way.*

Interview conducted by Craig Rogers

ALMOST THE NEWS...

High school teacher Geraldine Bowden was convicted in the Perth District Court of attempting to pervert the course of justice and sentenced to 10 months imprisonment after making false statements three times about who was driving her car when it was clocked speeding. District Court Judge Felicity Davis said that it struck at the heart of the foundations of Western justice and even civilisation itself if people who were entrusted with public office, such as teachers, had no respect for the law.

WA Police Constables Mark Raine and Martine Baas were acquitted in the Perth District Court of perverting the course of justice after they admitted making false statements twice that they had been involved in pursuits of criminals in their police car when it was clocked speeding. District Court Judge Anonymous Bastard said that it struck at the heart of the foundations of Western justice and even civilisation itself if people who were entrusted with public office, such as police officers, were not given the full support of the justice system.

At the London Olympics there has been a new doping scandal. A medal winner has been found to have absolutely no traces of drugs in their blood. Australia hasn't won all the medals. Head of the Australian Olympic Committee, John Coates, said, 'The failure of the team to win medals is proof that the Labor Government is a mob of long-haired commo poofters and the sooner we bring back flogging for petty theft, the better Australian society will be. It stands to reason. The only reason any Australian gets out of bed in the morning is to be good at watching sport. Everyone in Australia thinks exactly like me. I know this for a fact.'

Workers' Struggle in the Irish Revolution

Between 1917 and 1923 Ireland fought first a war of independence to free the country from British rule, then a savage civil war to determine what sort of state the newly 'liberated' nation would be: a republic free from any links to the British monarchy or a 'free state' still subordinate to the dictates of empire. Taken together this period is often referred to as the 'Irish Revolution'.

Certainly in one sense it was a revolution. The administration of twenty-six counties (six counties in the north-east of Ireland remained as part of the United Kingdom and still do today) passed from British into Irish hands. It was, however, fundamentally a national revolution. The new 'Free State' would be run along parliamentary lines presiding over a thoroughly capitalist system. Karl Marx asserted 'the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'; in the case of the newly 'independent' Ireland it would be an Irish executive managing the 'nation's affairs' for an Irish bourgeoisie. But it didn't have to be this way. The Irish Revolution offered brief glimpses of what could have been possible if the popular struggle had developed in another form.

The commonly told story of the Irish Revolution usually contends that the political activity of the nationalist party, Sinn Féin, combined with the brave and daring exploits of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) forced Britain to concede the country to Irish rule. It is true that after an overwhelming election victory by Sinn Féin in 1918 the party moved quickly to establish an alternative autonomous Irish parliament, the Dáil Éireann, to govern the country. The Dáil Éireann, however, was only recognised internationally by the equally isolated Bolshevik regime. Within months the British suppressed the Dáil declaring it an illegal assembly.

Meanwhile the Irish Republican Army was beginning to carry out attacks on British forces in Ireland. On the day the Dáil Éireann was first convened (21 January 1919), IRA volunteers ambushed an explosives shipment at Soloheadbeg killing the two Royal Irish Constabulary escort. Over the next three years the IRA carried out surprise attacks on police barracks and security force columns in the rural areas. There was a campaign of targeted assassinations directed against police, magistrates, British intelligence officers and anyone considered to be 'collaborating' with the authorities. The British forces in Ireland habitually reacted to these 'outrages' with brutal reprisals directed against an Irish population deemed to be intrinsically 'disloyal'.

Yet the War of Independence was a very localised affair. The armed campaign was sporadic and concentrated in Dublin and the west of the country. Many areas saw little or no action during the conflict. The IRA itself was a relatively small, poorly armed force. Michael Collins, one of the chief organisers of the IRA, estimated that only 15,000 men actively served in the IRA during the course of the war, with about 3,000 on active service at any one time. Serviceable weapons and ammunition were always in short supply. Undoubtedly, from the British point of view, the IRA was a threat to 'good order' in Ireland; but the IRA was not, on its own, a force capable of militarily dislodging the British from the country.

The most serious blows to the British administration came from the militant actions of the Irish working class. In 1918 Britain was still engaged in the horrific slaughter of the First World War. Critically short of troops 'his majesty's government' sought to extend conscription to Ireland, a measure it had thus far avoided for fear of arousing Irish hostility. They were right; a general strike was called in protest and on 23 April 1918, work was stopped in railways, docks, factories, mills, theatres, cinemas, trams, public services, shipyards, newspapers, shops, pubs (!) and even government munitions factories. The British responded in time-honoured fashion with repression. Internment without charge was implemented. Thirteen counties were proclaimed as 'special military areas'. The police were encouraged to break up all meetings (including sporting events) which did not apply for permits. The press reported 11 baton or bayonet charges by the police and military just in the month of July. Yet the clamp-down was not enough to stop the momentum. Trade unions ignored the need for meeting permits and continued to organise. The country was increasingly shifting towards an oppositional stance not just to conscription but to British authority generally. The British problem of how to enforce conscription upon thousands of disaffected Irish people was resolved only by the timely end of the war.

The end of the war meant that British forces would not have to impose conscription on a reluctant population but it did not remove the British need to reassert control of the country. In addition to the strong feeling among Irish people for an end to British rule there was a pronounced enthusiasm for the recent Russian revolution. Irish workers adopted the term 'soviets' to describe the hundreds of workplace occupations that were taking place all over Ireland. At Knocklong creamery workers took over their workplace. Over the door they hung a banner which read: 'Knocklong Soviet Creamery, we make butter not profits.'

Perhaps the most famous of the Irish 'soviets' was the Limerick soviet. In 1919, after the killing of a republican prisoner during an attempted escape, Limerick city was declared a 'special military area'; British soldiers occupied bridges over the Shannon River and people travelling into Limerick were required to produce identification documents from the police sergeant in their home district and obtain passes from the British general in charge. The Limerick Trades Council countered with the call for a general strike in the city. Support for the action among workers was overwhelming. Fourteen hundred workers came out on strike. Transport Union members in Dublin, when they heard of the strike, acted in solidarity and 'blacked' goods bound for Limerick. The strikers elected committees to take charge of propaganda, food supplies and other essentials. Food prices were fixed by the strike committee; they even issued their own currency. The British authorities were virtually helpless in the face of the strikers' growing organisation.

Sadly, the Limerick soviet went down to defeat. Workers were eventually compelled to return to work without the wholesale removal of the military pass system or British authority. The strike was not defeated, however, by the military power of the British. Rather it was undermined by the equivocating conservatism of the Irish trade union leadership: a leadership that was more frightened of the revolutionary implications of workers' control than it was of British sovereignty. The upsurge in worker militancy following the First World War had as one of its objects the liberation of Ireland from British domination, but it also held the aspiration of ending the exploitation and degradation that was foisted on the Irish working class by capitalism. Workers striking for better pay and conditions from Irish bosses were not only subject to British coercion. In areas where the British no longer maintained control it was often volunteers from the IRA (sometimes harbouring deep misgivings because they were themselves often poor farmers and workers) who were called upon by the bosses to stifle any hint of 'class warfare'.

The ultimate beneficiaries of Ireland's national 'revolution' were the leaders of the most prominent nationalist party, Sinn Féin. Despite occasional left-sounding rhetoric, these leaders had no intention of establishing anything other than a capitalist state. Even Sinn Féin's British adversaries realised this. The 'loyal' Belfast *Weekly Telegraph* commented:

It is well known that Lord French has decided that the Sinn Féin prisoners ought to be released. His opinion is — and he is thoroughly informed concerning recent developments — that the moderate element ... is now fighting for supremacy with the extremists, that the issue is doubtful, and that the release of the interned leaders might turn the scale in favour of the moderates. (15 February 1919)

The Irish Revolution saw a timid and reformist trade union/labour leadership abandon the political space to the nationalists of Sinn Féin. There was no inevitability that this had to be the outcome. The energy and militancy of Ireland's working class was the real 'spectre' that Britain feared. Nonetheless, the trade union officialdom, to which the workers looked to for support and guidance, demobilised the struggle time and time again. The conscious revolutionary voices among the workers were too few and far between, and were not 'networked' enough to wrest control away from the established leadership.

The added tragedy was that only the prospect of a 'workers' republic' was likely to win the allegiance of Protestant workers in the north-east: workers who had shown their militancy in past industrial struggles but were repelled by the Catholic-tinged nationalism offered by Sinn Fein.

The nationalists of the 'southern' twenty-six counties did gain a 'Free State' out of the struggles of the Irish people but they only did so after agreeing to a partitioned and impoverished travesty of what most workers had fought for. The history of the Irish Republic since that time has been marked by economic stagnation, immiseration and mass emigration. Perhaps the final word should go to the renowned Irish socialist, James Connolly (who sadly could not influence the Irish Revolution personally, having been executed by the British for his part in the 1916 Rising):

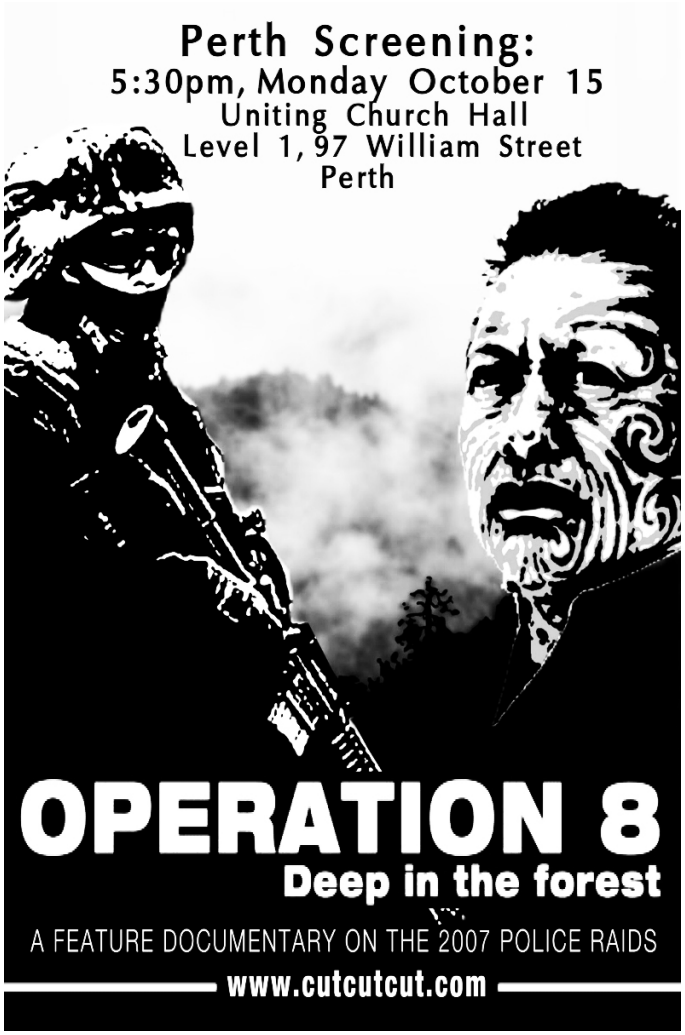
If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain.

Alas, the activity of Irish workers during the national revolution did not deliver the workers' republic that Connolly had hoped for.

The past rarely provides an easy, ready-made answer to the dilemmas faced by contemporary revolutionaries. Nevertheless we can be inspired by it and have a sense of history to enable us to critically 'seize the time' whenever opportunities for radicalisation appear; for we should always stand 'chun réabhlóid agus saoirse' (for revolution and freedom).

Recommended reading and watching (and where much of this is stolen from):
Conor Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland: Popular Militancy 1917 to 1923*, Pluto Press, London, 1996.
YouTube: Sóivéidí na hÉireann [a documentary concerning the period. Irish language with English subtitles.]

Spáilpín



What is property?

Stirner and Communism

In this article, I'm trying to respond to two other articles. Mainly it's a furthering of the ideas of Hester van Zelst's article Me and Mine in Avenue#1 and secondarily of Cedric Beidatsch's article Is Communism Just an Idea? in Avenue#2. The first article deals with Max Stirner's concept of Ownership, the second with the idea and the tradition of communism. The conclusion of Hester's article is that it's impossible to truly have private property while there still is a state. It also says that questions on how to treat private property in a practical way remain unanswered by Stirner. I will try to show in my response that the tradition of communism, in the sense in which it is not the same as the nineteenth century idea of communism, as described in Beidatsch's article, could actually fill this gap. This also means I'm not following the traditional interpretation of Stirner as an Individualist Anarchist. I will not try to defend any 'true' view of Stirner, and the view I'm proposing here is quite likely not close to his personal opinions. Whatever they may have been, Stirner encouraged everyone not to care about them: 'Do with it (his book) what you will and can, that is your affair and does not trouble me.' After all, I find in Stirner's work a very useful critique of property, a critique that is very helpful for envisioning forms of ownership, that break out of the collective/individual 'option'.

Stirner's critique of private property

Stirner speaks very derogatorily of private property. For him, the private proprietor is nothing but a 'Kotsasse', an old Prussian-German term for a very small landowner, which if translated literally would be something like shit-sitter. Stirner deliberately makes that association, since he states that the liberals' concern is to make everyone the free lord of her own property, even 'if this ground has only so much area as can have its requirements adequately filled by manure of one person', that is, you'd own as much as you can shit on. The liberal proprietor is someone who, by virtue of respecting everyone else's private property, owns just as much as to be able to turn around on her ground. By being the sole and complete master over her property by guarantee of the state, she's excluded from the biggest part of the world.

Instead of respecting borders of any kind of property, Stirner encourages everyone to trespass upon these borders and always see any property as potentially your own: 'I do not step back shyly from your property, but look upon it always as my property, in which I need to "respect" nothing. Pray do the same with what you call my property! With this view we shall most easily come to an understanding with each other.'

This view rejects one of the most central points of private property, namely its secured exclusiveness. If the whole world can be mine and also yours, the only way to exclude one another is to actually consume your property. Stirner doesn't care about the potentiality of ownership, just about the actuality. It is not the ability to appropriate that is important, but the actual act of appropriation. What I own is not a status, but a process, the process of appropriation. And because it's not a status, there's no need to assume a stable owner-subject, since what I own right now is what I appropriate right now, which I transform, consume, destroy, shape, dissolve or work on at will.

Any stable form of ownership entails the danger of turning the ownership relationship around, so that I'm the one being owned, because it requires a constant act of appropriation. The currently existing static form of ownership is based on the continuously performed act of creating yourself as a stable owner-subject, the bourgeois citizen. The constant act of appropriating is then acted out by this subject, which is my legal person and therefore a fictitious person with no real powers but those given by state, police and law. These are the very same powers that render me, in the sense that this pronoun doesn't designate my legal person, powerless.

This is why I own private property not by means of my own powers, but at the mercy of the state. To get this 'mercy', the state imposes a set of demands on me, and makes me a 'criminal' if I do not pay proper respect to them. So by establishing a stable ownership-relation there is an owner-subject created which, itself, by means of police and ideology, does the work of appropriating me, to give that legal fiction a reality in me. To own something by my own means, no creation of me as a stable identity may be necessary, since then this identity would consume me, in order to make me able to consume what I own.

Alternative forms of property after Stirner

The question remains now: what kind of property and what relations of property actually do not consume me – consumption being the appropriative act par excellence for Stirner – but instead give me the possibility of unrestrictedly consuming them? As Hester points out, Stirner remains quite unclear about it, but I nevertheless think that this gap can be filled with an already existing concept, the concept of the commons. Since Stirner doesn't mention that option, from now on, the development of my argument can't rely on his authority any more. The goods that I'm referring to as 'commons' should not be understood as 'common property of all', in the sense of a stable relation between everybody and the object, with the object constantly being owned 'by all', since then the only difference between that and private property would be that the owner-subject is a collective instead of an individual, which is still some sort of identity with constant existence, which can be separated from the individuals that are said to constitute it. 'There are no commons without commoning,' as Peter Linebaugh simply put it. The verb 'commoning' is designating all those variant activities that on the one hand signify some sort of appropriation of goods needed for subsistence and on the other hand those that constitute and safeguard their existence as goods.

Historically, the common good par excellence was the forest, which was used to gather food, fuel, building materials and as meadows and pastures for animals. At the same time, these forms of using the forest were sustainable and kept the wood in a constant state for further appropriation of its goods. This form of appropriation, which treats the forest as a dynamic entity, is opposed to the form of appropriation acted out by the means of enclosure, which treats the forest as a stable entity, like a stock of wood which can be used up. By the means of commoning, you appropriate the forest, making it 'your' forest, by your appropriation of the goods of the forest. In contrast, by enclosure the forest itself is treated as a good and its goods are turned into commodities.

So Commons are the kind of property that I can only appropriate by using them, since if I do not use them there's no institution which guarantees constant ownership over them, and therefore no institution which binds me to certain rationalities, interests and the like, which are not mine. This leaves me both with less and more property than with private property. Less, because the amount of stuff I

own is restricted to the stuff I consume, which means I'm left without my personal stock. I have less, because this ownership does not include stuff that I could potentially use, but just what I actually use. But I have more, because this consumption is not restricted by any external means, but only by my own power. In other words, I can own as much food as I can eat, I can own as much living space as I can occupy, I can own as many clothes as I can carry around. But also, I can appropriate all the food that is not eaten, all the living space that is not lived in, all the clothes that are not worn. So I own more in the sense that the amount of stuff I can potentially consume gets bigger, since everything that is not actually consumed by someone can be potentially consumed by me. In this sense, I, and not only I but everyone, can be owner of the 'whole world'.

Egoism

Even though Stirner tries to demolish all moral thought, his work is based on two lines of ethical thinking: an ethics of egoism and an ethics of 'ownness' – Stirner's term for not being owned by anything but instead being able to dissolve yourself in spontaneity. There are conflicting usages of the term of egoism within the work of Stirner, which is inconsistent in several ways. It's changing from the widespread interpretation, that egoism is the mode of action, in which a certain Subject acts according to its interests – basically the economists' view – to an existentialist interpretation, where 'the ego' and 'egoism' is nothing but an empty phrase, meant to signify some kind of 'just doing what you do', e.g. some kind of authenticity, but without constructing a 'true self' and the division in the self that this would lead to. In the first sense, it will be possible to claim what an egoist would do in a certain situation, but this would clearly go against Stirner's intention of not being owned, because it would establish him as an egoist-subject and therefore subject him to the demands of 'the egoist'. In the other interpretation, 'egoism' would be interchangeable with 'ownness' and the question of what an egoist does is simply not answerable generally. Instead, it would need, for example, to ask Me, and then I could talk about no one else than Me – and therefore this egoism would reject any universal principle of action. In a reply to his critics, Stirner states: 'The Unique One is the declaration of which it is conceded with all openness and honesty that it – declares nothing' – meaning 'the unique one' is no subject at all and its egoism doesn't create an egoist- subject with egoist behaviour specified by universal 'egoist' principles. I will stick to the second interpretation and, therefore, give the term egoism way less relevance than it has in Stirner's work, because if it is understood in the first interpretation, egoism is as much an obstacle to my 'ownness' as any other kind of morality. This way it is possible to avoid problems that so-called 'altruistic' actions pose for Stirner and that are the basis of the ideology which says that common ownership is incompatible with 'human nature'. Common ownership can be egoistic in Stirner's sense, since it does not need you to give away your sovereignty over yourself to own things. But it can, of course, also be altruistic, if you make it an Idea after which you have to shape your 'self', and therefore, that you have to sacrifice yourself.

Ownness and Communist Revolution

As a consequence of the argument above, I don't accord egoism much relevance. The question of how to perform egoism becomes obsolete, since it would be like asking omeone else what you should spontaneously do. Still, a theory on what endangers ownness can be developed, and in my opinion, this theory is based on a theory of ownership that makes space both for anarchist and communist customs. I think the ethics of ownness can actually be a basis on which to ground an outlook on a positive understanding of property, so that it's possible to say more than that anarchism and private property are opposed to each other, but also what an alternative form of property could look like.

How to interpret the phrase 'the abolition of private property and appropriation of the means of production by the proletariat', which is not just part of statist-marxist revolutionary programs, but also of anarcho-syndicalist ideas of revolution, is one important example of where Stirner's understanding of property could help. If appropriation is understood and acted out as a stable relationship, then a stable owner-subject needs to be established, or in the case of the proletariat, preserved. Then the self-contradiction of being both proletarian, that is, not owning anything, and also being owner of your means of production can just be maintained by the split between a owner-subject, which is the 'proletarian state', which is to be understood as the proletarian collective, and the actual proletarian individual. An alternative to this could be that the appropriation of the means of production would actually mean a transformation of them. Instead of a changing of ownership over the means, which was in the historical case a change of ownership over labour power and machines, there would be a change in the means themselves, which are to sustain human life. The means which rely on enclosure and private property would have to be replaced by means which rely on commoning and commons.

So in this interpretation, a communist revolution which would not oppose my ownness and my appropriation of the world, but instead rely on it, would not be a changing of hands of property, but a development of new customs and knowledge which, neither necessarily violent or nonviolent, would replace the current custom and knowledge fixed in property law with customs and knowledge of open access and sustainability. As this other view of revolution doesn't rely on one single historical event, but on a long development, it is nothing to be waited for. The practice of commoning is already lived in a lot of activities, none of which by themselves alone are revolutionary, but which in total could be the ground for another paradigm, way older than the current paradigm of so called self-interest, of a social being-together, based on the abundance that actually exists rather than the scarcity that is feared.

Clemens Schmid

ANARCHIST JOKE OF THE MONTH

So there was a couple of anarchist parents who reluctantly decided to send their five-year-old child to the local state school. The kids were asked to write a poem called The Flag. The child of the anarchists wrote:

I wipe my arse on the flag of Australia,
I wipe my arse on the flag of Brazil,
I wipe my arse on the flag of China,
I wipe my arse on the flag of Denmark …

and so on through the alphabet to Yemen and Zaire.

The teacher was appalled and the principal summoned the parents to the school. 'How can you explain this?' yelled the principal, throwing the poem in front of the parents.

They looked, and shook their heads. 'It's appalling. But really? From a child so young, you expect rhyming poetry?'

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